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Introduction

For higher degree, or postgraduate searching, you’ll be performing mini searches to test each individual term and sometimes combinations of terms in order to find the best words for your final search. Eventually you will discard all of these test searches and construct a comprehensive search using the lists of terms you have included in the logic grid in your Word document. Unfortunately a search done in one database cannot simply be copied and pasted into another. Although there may be many similarities, field names and abbreviations will be different, the indexing languages are different, and the user interface will sometimes require a different method.

Embase, like PubMed, has an indexing language. This is called Emtree, and is the equivalent of PubMed’s MeSH. However its field names, and the way in which they are applied, are very different from PubMed, and unlike PubMed it does not automatically explode terms - you have to instruct it to do so.
Embase Useful Tips

- Use two browser windows or tabs in Embase – one for Advanced Search, and one for Emtree. That way it’s easy to move between looking up terms and testing searches.

- To see Emtree terms used for a particular article click on **Index Terms** underneath the article details.

- Use the **Synonyms** lists in Emtree to find words to search in titles and abstracts - remember Emtree alone will not produce a comprehensive search, and at times the concept you’re dealing with may not even have an appropriate Emtree term.

- Be aware that Embase does NOT explode Emtree terms automatically to search more specific subcategories. You have to tell it to do so.

- Always check Emtree terms to see the list of more specific terms before you explode them.

- In Embase you need to enclose all phrases in inverted commas, otherwise the words will be searched separately, and they may be found nowhere near one another. It doesn’t matter whether you use single or double quotation marks, as long as you are consistent.

- Check Embase wildcard and truncation options – they used to be very limited but they have now been expanded.

- Multiple fields can be searched at the same time. e.g. cognition:ti,ab.

- Always use the **Advanced Search screen**. It will give you the best level of control of your search, and make sure that mapping options are **TURNED OFF**

- Add limits (such as English language, age, or date limits) only when you have completed your search.
Embase Field Codes

When searching Embase it's important to tell the database where to look for words - titles of articles, abstracts, the indexing language of the database. To do this you need to use field codes. They will make a great difference to the effectiveness of your search!

If you search a word or phrase without a field name attached, Embase will map your term to what it thinks is an appropriate Emtree term, it will explode that term, and it will also search your word as free text in all fields. This may produce some rather unexpected results, and so MAPPING IS NOT RECOMMENDED for advanced searching where greater precision and control are needed.

Embase has a wide range of field codes, but those you're most likely to use are:-

/de - to search for an exact Emtree heading
e.g. cognition/de
This search will retrieve articles indexed ONLY with the general term cognition. It will NOT search the narrower, more specific terms in the subject tree

:de - to search for words or phrases anywhere in an Emtree heading
e.g. cognition:de
This search will retrieve articles where the word cognition occurs somewhere in the Emtree heading. It will NOT explode the term, but it will often find additional material where the word cognition is not the only word in the heading. e.g. social cognition

/exp - to explode terms to include narrower more specific terms listed in the subject tree, as well as the general term
e.g. cognition/exp

/majr - to restrict your search to major indexing terms only
e.g. cognition/majr

:lnk to "free float" subheadings in Embase, so that they are not attached to a specific index term
e.g. "adverse drug reaction":lnk
Subheadings are listed under drug subheadings, routes of drug administration, and disease subheadings

:ti - to search for words or phrases in titles of articles
e.g. cognition:ti

:ab - to search for words or phrases in abstracts of articles
e.g. cognition:ab

:jt - to search for an exact journal title
e.g. "New England Journal of Medicine":jt

:ta - to search for an abbreviated journal title
e.g. "new engl j med":ta

To search a word or a phrase in ALL FIELDS simply use the Advanced Search box, omit field codes, and make sure that mapping options are TURNED OFF.
Embase (on the Elsevier platform) Advanced Searching Help – Updated July 2017

Language Part 1 - looking for Emtree terms

1. Open a Word document and set up a logic grid - you'll need a column for each concept. In this example there are two. Column one will contain words relating to cognitive therapy, and column two will contain words relating to post traumatic stress disorder.

2. Open two browser windows - one for Embase Advanced Search (use the drop down box under Search at the top of your screen) and one for Emtree (use the drop down box under Browse at the top of your screen). Right click on the link to open Emtree in a new tab.

3. At the Advanced Search screen, make sure that mapping options are TURNED OFF.

4. Perform a simple search in Embase, using your own words - "cognitive therapy" and PTSD. Remember that in Embase you need to enclose all phrases in inverted commas (quotes).

5. Scroll through the results to see if there are any articles that look as if they're on your topic.

6. Once you have found a suitable article click on Indexing Terms.

This will display a list of Emtree terms.

The article I have chosen is "Adult Service-Users' Experiences of Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy"

And the indexing is
7. Look up cognitive therapy in Emtree

![cognitive therapy](image)

- If you search "cognitive therapy"/de only "cognitive therapy" will be searched, and the more specific Emtree term "acceptance and commitment therapy" will not be included
- If you search "cognitive therapy"/exp the term will be exploded to include any narrower terms.

8. Look at the synonyms listed further down the screen – there is quite a long list, and these could be searched in titles and abstracts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synonyms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy); cognitive behavior therapy; cognitive behavior treatment; cognitive behavioral therapy; cognitive behavioral treatment; cognitive behaviour therapy; cognitive behaviour treatment; cognitive behavioural therapy; cognitive behavioural treatment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- If you search "cognitive therapy"/de only "cognitive therapy" will be searched, and the more specific Emtree term "acceptance and commitment therapy" will not be included
- If you search "cognitive therapy"/exp the term will be exploded to include any narrower terms.

9. Look up posttraumatic stress disorder in Emtree. This term cannot be exploded as there are no narrower terms listed underneath it.

In this case the Embase indexing term is the same as PsycINFO's, and there is quite a long list of synonyms which may be searched in titles and abstracts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synonyms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>combat disorders; combat fatigue; combat stress; post-traumatic stress; post-traumatic stress disorder; posttraumatic neurosis; posttraumatic psychic syndrome; posttraumatic psychosis; posttraumatic stress; posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD); posttraumatic syndrome; psychosis, posttraumatic; PTSD; stress disorders; post-traumatic; stress disorders; traumatic; stress; posttraumatic; traumatic stress; traumatic stress disorder; war neurosis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Now update your logic grid with the appropriate Emtree terms

**Note:** When searching Embase ALL phrases must be enclosed in inverted commas. It doesn’t matter whether you use double or single quotes, as long as you’re consistent.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Therapy</th>
<th>PTSD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;cognitive therapy&quot;/exp OR</td>
<td>&quot;posttraumatic stress disorder&quot;/exp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;cognitive behavioral therapy&quot;/exp OR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Language Part 2 - looking for words in other fields**

1. Use lists of terms you have already used in PubMed and PsycINFO to provide ideas for synonymous words and phrases to search in titles or abstracts - you will probably think of additional possibilities.

2. Check titles and abstracts of articles from your Embase search for additional synonyms and other alternative words to add to your search.

3. Check the appropriate synonyms lists attached to Emtree terms for additional words and phrases to search in titles and abstracts.

4. Add these terms to the logic grid, remembering that **ALL** phrases must be enclosed in inverted commas (quotes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Therapy</th>
<th>PTSD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;cognitive therapy&quot;/exp OR</td>
<td>&quot;posttraumatic stress disorder&quot;/exp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cognitive behavioral therapy&quot;/exp OR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;cognitive therap*&quot;:ti,ab OR</td>
<td>&quot;stress reaction*&quot;:ti,ab OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;cognitive psychotherap*&quot;:ti,ab OR</td>
<td>PTSD.ti,ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;cognitive behav* therap*&quot;:ti,ab OR</td>
<td>&quot;post traumatic stress&quot;:ti,ab OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBT:ti,ab</td>
<td>&quot;posttraumatic stress&quot;:ti,ab OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;post-traumatic stress&quot;:ti,ab OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;war neuros*&quot;:ti,ab OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;combat stress&quot;:ti,ab OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;combat neuros*&quot;:ti,ab OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;traumatic stress&quot;:ti,ab OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;shell shock&quot;:ti,ab</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Logic

When you have finished collecting terms you are ready to search. You will need to OR the individual words in each column, and then AND the columns together.

This is how the table contents are converted to a search strategy:

First column

"cognitive therapy"/exp OR "cognitive behavioral therapy"/exp OR "cognitive ther*":ti,ab OR "cognitive psychother*":ti,ab OR "cognitive behav* therap*":ti,ab OR CBT:ti,ab

AND

Second column

"posttraumatic stress disorder"/exp OR "stress reaction*":ti,ab OR PTSD.ti,ab OR "post traumatic stress":ti,ab OR "post-traumatic stress":ti,ab OR "war neuros*":ti,ab OR "combat stress":ti,ab OR "combat neuros*":ti,ab OR "traumatic stress":ti,ab OR "shell shock":ti,ab

When you have long lists of terms it’s much easier to search each column separately, then combine them.

Note: - When searching each column separately you don’t need to use parentheses around the groups of terms. When you combine the separate searches, Embase will treat them as if each search is enclosed in parentheses, and your logic will work.

Performing the Search

- Go to the Results page, click on Search History, and delete all previous searches
- Go back to the Advanced Search page
- Copy and paste the first set of terms into Embase, and search
- Now that you’ve turned off mapping options you can simply use the box at the top of the results page for the rest of your columns, so copy and paste the second set of terms into Embase, and search
- Once you have performed the two searches click in each search box to select the two searches, make sure the AND option is selected, and click on Combine

Applying Limits

Select the limits you want from the options in the toolbar at the top of the screen.

Then press Enter to rerun your final search with the limits applied
Summary

- Create a logic grid with one column for each concept.
- Look for appropriate Emtree terms
- Look for words to search in titles and abstracts – check the Synonyms listed with Emtree terms for suggestions, as well as words appearing in titles and abstracts of articles you find.
- Add these to your logic grid.
- Perform the search
- Add Limits.

Dealing With Results

- You can save your search and rerun it at any time
- You can set up an alert. – which will automatically notify you of new material on your topic
- You can export your results to EndNote

Email Alerts

You can set email alerts either from Session Results or from Saved Search pages.

- Login (You will need to register to save searches and to set up email alerts.)
- From the Session Results page, select the search you want to set as an alert and click the envelope icon. It will appear to the right of the screen near your search result count
- The Set email alert pop-up box opens, prompting you to assign a subject (a name for the alert) and to specify email addresses to which it should be sent.
Click the drop-down frequency menu to choose from the following options:
every day, every week, every month, every two months, every three months, every six months and
every year.
For weekly alerts you can choose the day of the week you want the alert to be sent.
For monthly alerts you can choose the day of the month you want the alert to be sent.

Type in the name of the alert.

Enter the email address to which the alert is to be sent, for multiple email addresses use ";" as a
separator. This information can be edited at any time in Alert Details text box.

There are two options for email alert format: html and plain text. Select your preferred email format
by clicking the radio button.

Choose the citation format option: Citations Only, Citations and Index Terms, Citations and Abstracts,
Citations Abstracts and Index Terms, or Full record.
For Citations Only format, the limit is 500 records. If your search has produced more than 500 records, you may follow a link to view all results in Embase.

If you select Citations and Abstract format, the first 25 results will be sent by email and you may follow the link provided to see the remaining records in Embase.

- Choose whether you want to include articles in press or in process in your alert
- Click on Set Email Alert

**Exporting Results to EndNote**

- At the Session Results screen, select the result set you want, and click on View Results
- Select individual references or multiple results using radio buttons after Selected
- Click the Export option in the blue bar above the list of results
- Choose Export format - RIS format (Reference Manager, ProCite, EndNote)
- Click on Export - at the bottom of the export format box
- At the Ready for download screen - click on Download
- Select Open