

Literature searching: Too many or not enough results

Too many results? How to narrow your search

1. Check your question is focussed and that you have chosen the most appropriate search terms.
2. Apply limits if appropriate. Useful limits are language (limit to English) and/or date (for example the last 10 years or the last 5 years).
3. Narrow your question by adding another part if appropriate; e.g. if you have three parts to your question, try adding a fourth part.
4. You could amend your search and just use thesaurus terms. You could even just use the major thesaurus terms (i.e. instead of exploding a thesaurus term, select major). Note that you might miss relevant articles this way.
5. Alternatively, you could use your own search terms either in title and abstract rather than any field, or just in the title. Note that you might miss relevant articles this way.

For further training on narrowing your search, access the free e-learning module at

<https://portal.e-lfh.org.uk/Component/Details/512692>

Too few results? How to broaden your search

1. Check your search strategy – have you combined your terms in the correct way? Have you used all appropriate search terms (synonyms etc.)? Are you in the right database?
2. Try and widen your question; e.g. if you have three parts to your question, try just using two.
3. Is it a rare topic? There might not be much literature on it.

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