

Healthcare Databases Advanced Search FAQs

This document gives the answers to a number of frequently asked questions about NICE Evidence Service's Healthcare Database Advanced Search (HDAS). If you need further help or training, please contact your [local health library](#).

Please note that you can only use HDAS if you have an [OpenAthens account](#).

About Healthcare Database Advanced Search (HDAS)

- **What is HDAS?**

NICE Evidence Service's healthcare databases advanced search (HDAS) enables you to search across one or more of our eight databases – AMED, BNI, Cinahl, Embase, Health Business Elite, HMIC, Medline and PsycInfo. You can search individual databases, or some or all at the same time.

- **How do I use HDAS?**

HDAS is designed so that you can build up your search using one search term (either a single word or a phrase) at a time. You can construct a search by entering each of your search terms in the search box, and then combining them using the **AND** or **OR** buttons. You can also apply search limits.

- **How do I get the best results?**

Although you can search some or all databases at the same time, if you are doing a literature search, you will retrieve the best results by searching one database at a time. You can then repeat the search in another database.

Searching in one database at a time means that you can use the database's thesaurus and all its available limits.

Searching

- **How do I choose the field I want to search in?**

Pick your search field from the list next to the search box. You can choose:

- Title and abstract
- Any Field
- Author
- ISSN
- Journal
- Name
- Publication Type
- Title

The default search is **Title and Abstract**.

- **How do I search for a phrase?**

To search for a phrase, put speech marks around the search term (eg. “cognitive behaviour therapy”)

- **How do I combine search terms?**

To combine search terms, check the box next to the line numbers you want to combine, check either the **AND** or **OR** button, and click **Combine Selected Searches**.

If you combine your search terms using **AND**, you will retrieve results which include all the search terms. If you combine your search term using **OR**, you will retrieve results which include any of the search terms.

You cannot combine a search in one database with a search in another database.

- **What happens if I put multiple terms in the search box?**

If you put more than one search term in the search term, the system will automatically default to an **AND** search. This means that you will retrieve results which include all the search terms you’ve entered in the search box.

- **Can I use AND and OR in the search box?**

Although the system is designed to enable you to build searches one step at a time, you can also enter a search using **AND** or **OR** into the box. You do not need to use upper case letters.

Including **AND** in a search for all of a number of search terms isn’t necessary, because the system defaults to an **AND** search. If you want to search for one or any of a number of search terms, you should use **OR**. You must include it between each search term.

- **Do I need to use brackets in a long search?**

If you are constructing a complicated search, using **AND** and **OR** in the search box, you may need to use brackets to ensure that the search retrieves the right results. This is because the search will always search on **AND** first.

If you want to search for articles which include depression and either cognitive behaviour therapy or CBT in the title, you must search for depression **AND** (“cognitive behaviour therapy” or CBT). If you don’t include the brackets, you will retrieve a search for articles with either CBT in the title or both cognitive behaviour therapy and depression in the title.

- **What operators can I use?**

As well as **AND** and **OR**, HDAS also recognises **NOT** and **ADJ**. If you want to exclude search terms, you can use **NOT**. Using this operator between two terms means that you will retrieve results which include the first term but not the second.

Use **ADJ** and a number to search for records in which the search terms are within that number of words proximity of each other in either direction.

- **What is a wild card?**

A wildcard is a symbol that takes the place of one or more letters. In HDAS the wildcard symbol is an asterisk (*). You can put the wildcard at the end of the first few letters of your search term to search on all words beginning with those letters. For example, depress* will find depressed and depressive and depression.

You can also specify the maximum number of characters you want to search for after the wildcard. For example, therap*4 will find therapy and therapist but not therapeutic.

- **How do I apply a search limit?**

If you are searching across more than one databases, you can limit your search by publication year only. If you are searching in just one database, you can apply any of the limits available in that database.

You can apply a limit at the same time as entering your search term by applying the limit and clicking **Search** at the bottom of the page. You can also apply a limit to a search you have already done, by typing the number of the search into the search box and clicking **Search**.

- **How do I rerun my search in another database?**

Under the Search History box, there is a line of text that starts **You are currently searching...** and the name of the database you have just searched in. To change the database:

- Click on the box that says **Choose another** and select the database you want to rerun your search in
- Click on either **Re-run all line numbers** or **Re-run selected line numbers**.

Using the thesaurus

- **How do I use the thesaurus?**

Each database has a thesaurus, which is an index of that database's controlled language. To use the thesaurus, enter your search term, and click **Map to Thesaurus**.

You will then be able to see all subject headings used in your database. Some databases display these thematically, and some alphabetically. If the search term you entered is a subject heading, it will be displayed in bold.

- **How do I see all terms related to a subject heading?**

To see all terms related to a subject heading, click on the heading. If there are any, this will show you broader terms, narrower terms or related terms.

- **What is an exploded search?**

An exploded search will retrieve records which contain your chosen subject heading and any narrower terms.

- **What are major descriptors?**

If you search with your subject heading only as a major descriptor you will retrieve articles where the subject matter is predominantly that of your chosen thesaurus term. This will result in a focussed search and may exclude articles of interest.

- **How do I view subheadings?**

To view a subject heading's subheadings, check the subheadings box. You can select one or more of the subheadings as well as the main subject heading, and combine them.

- **What are scope notes?**

Scope notes provide further information about the subject heading. They are not available in all databases, and in Embase, only show when the subject heading was added to the thesaurus.

Viewing and saving results

- **How do I view my results?**

To view your results, click on the number in the **Hits** column in the appropriate row in the Search History.

- **How do I remove duplicates?**

You can remove duplicates from one or multiple duplicates. Tick the box next to the search number in the Search History, and then click **Remove Duplicates**.

De-duplication should be your final search step, as you cannot continue to work with a de-duplicated set. De-duplicated sets will not run as part of a saved search. You cannot remove duplicates from over 500 results.

- **How do I change the order of the results?**

If you have less than 500 results, you can sort your results by publication date or author by choosing your preferred option in the drop down menu, and clicking **Sort**.

- **How do I see the abstract?**

To view the abstract and further information about one particular record, click on the title of the article. To view the abstracts for every result, tick **Show Abstracts**.

- **How do I export my results?**

To export your results:

- Select the results you want
- Scroll down to the bottom of the page
- Select an **output** format

- Select a **display** format
- Click **Export Results**
- **How do I email my results?**
To email your results:
 - Select the results you want
 - Scroll down to the bottom of the page
 - Select an **output** format
 - Select a **display** Format
 - Click **Email Results**
 - Enter the recipient's email address
 - Click **Send Email**
- **What output formats can I choose?**
You can output your format in HTML, PDF, MS Word, Text, XML or RIS.
- **What is included in each format type?**
The short display format displays the: Title, Citation, Author, Abstract and Source.

The medium display format displays the: Title, Citation, Author, Language, Abstract, Publication Type and Source.

The full display format displays the: Title, Citation, Author, Language, Abstract, Publication Type, Subject Headings and Source.
- **What is the clipboard?**
The Clipboard enables you to save results temporarily within your session. You can select individual results from different results sets and databases, and output them in your chosen format.
- **How do I save my search?**
To save a complete search, click **Save All** above the Search History. On the next page, name your search, and click **Save**.

To save some of the search, check the boxes next to the rows you want to save, and click **Save Selected Rows**. On the next page, name your search, and click **Save**.
- **How do I create an alert?**
You can create an alert either from the search results page, or from your saved searches. From the search results page, you can create an alert in the same way as you save a search, but by clicking **Save & Create an Alert** instead of **Save**. If you want to create an alert for a search you have already saved, go to **My Saved Searches**, check the relevant search and click **Create Alert**.
- **How do I delete a saved search or alert?**

To delete a saved search go to **My saved searches**, check the relevant search and click **Delete Search**.

To delete a save alert go to **My saved alerts**, check the relevant search and click **Delete Alert**.