

How to search for scientific literature

Searching the scientific literature

Science Careers, Adam Ruben, 20 Jan 2016
How to read a scientific paper



“Nothing makes you feel stupid quite like
Reading a scientific journal article.”

- Searching for journal articles
- Deciding which articles to read
- Finding the information you want

Science Careers, Elisabeth Pain, 21 Mar 2016
How to (seriously) read a scientific paper



„ Although it is clear that reading
scientific papers
Becomes easier with experience,
the stumbling blocks are real, and
it is up to each scientist to
Identify and apply the techniques
that work best for them.“

Searching the literature



Search input field with a magnifying glass icon and radio buttons for "Articles (include patents)" and "Case law".

PubMed

PubMed comprises more than 26 million citations for biomedical literature from MEDLINE, life science journals, and online books. Citations may include links to full-text content from PubMed Central and publisher web sites.

Scopus

Search Alerts Lists

Join us for the webinar on September 29: Best practices to power up your research

Document search | Author search | Affiliation search | Advanced search | Browse Sources | Compare journals

Search for... *E.g., "heart attack" AND stress* Article Title, Abstract, Keywords

+ Add search field

Limit to:

Date Range (inclusive):
 Published All years to Present
 Added to Scopus in the last 7 days

Document Type: ALL

Subject Areas:
 Life Sciences (> 4,300 titles . .)
 Health Sciences (> 6,800 titles . 100% Medline coverage)
 Physical Sciences (> 7,200 titles . .)
 Social Sciences & Humanities (> 5,300 titles . .)

ScienceDirect

Explore scientific, technical, and medical research on ScienceDirect

Search for peer-reviewed journals, articles, book chapters and open access content.

Keywords Author name Journal/book title Volume Issue Page

Advanced search



WEB OF SCIENCE™

Search Web of Science™ Core Collection

arts.units.it

ArTS Aiuto Sfogliala Cerca nel repository

ArTS Archivio della ricerca di Trieste

ArTS è il sistema di gestione integrata dei dati della ricerca adottato dall' Università degli Studi di Trieste

Searching the literature

Keywords vs subject headings search

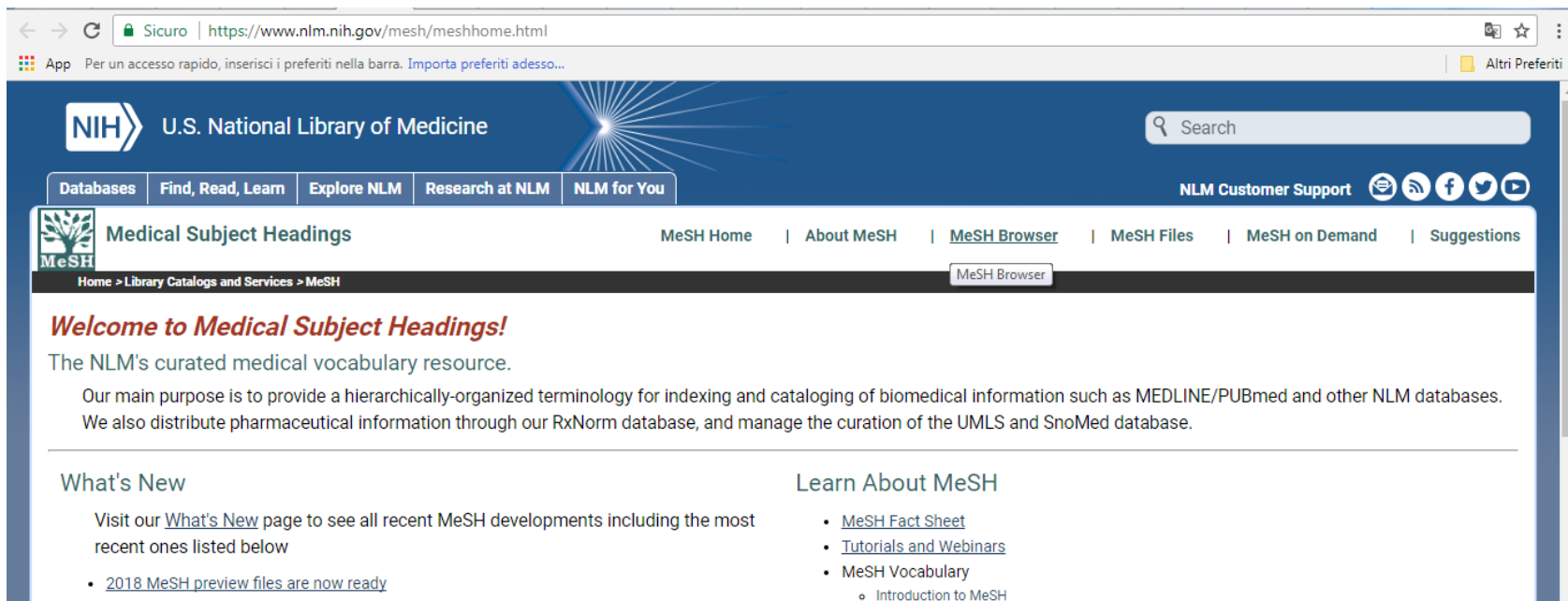
Keyword and subject searching methods are two widely used ways to effectively find items on your topic. They are usually offered to the researcher among other search options by any index, database, or online library catalog. There are important advantages to both methods; knowing how to use them and how they differ from each other will help you retrieve better, more accurate results.

Keyword Searching	Subject Headings Searching
uses words or phrases of researcher's choice	uses specific, predefined terms
more flexible – searches in several fields	less flexible – searches in only one field
results may include irrelevant items, less focused search	results include very relevant items, more focused search
may yield too many or too few results	in case of too many results uses sub-headings to focus on one aspect of the broader subject
keywords are appropriate for use across databases; not database-specific	subject headings may differ from database to database

Searching the literature

What is subject searching?

Subject searching uses **subject headings** that come from a predetermined list of possible terms and reflect the content of the item. Most academic libraries use Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) for Subject Search of their online catalogs. A subject search is more **specific** than a keyword search: it looks in only one field of each record – **the subject field**. Many databases use subject headings that are unique to that particular database. This **controlled vocabulary** allows for consistency of terms across the database. For example, **Medline** database uses **MeSH** – medical subject headings and **CINAHL** database also has its own unique headings. These subject headings can be found in the database's **thesaurus**. In the thesaurus subjects are often listed with broader, narrower, or related subjects. Using the database's thesaurus will help you identify most effective search terms.



The screenshot shows the MeSH website homepage. The browser address bar displays "https://www.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/meshhome.html". The page features the NIH logo and "U.S. National Library of Medicine" header. A search bar is located in the top right. Below the header, there are navigation tabs: "Databases", "Find, Read, Learn", "Explore NLM", "Research at NLM", and "NLM for You". The main content area is titled "Medical Subject Headings" and includes a "MeSH Home" link. A welcome message reads: "Welcome to Medical Subject Headings! The NLM's curated medical vocabulary resource. Our main purpose is to provide a hierarchically-organized terminology for indexing and cataloging of biomedical information such as MEDLINE/PUBmed and other NLM databases. We also distribute pharmaceutical information through our RxNorm database, and manage the curation of the UMLS and SnoMed database." Below this, there are two sections: "What's New" and "Learn About MeSH". The "What's New" section includes a link to "2018 MeSH preview files are now ready". The "Learn About MeSH" section includes links to "MeSH Fact Sheet", "Tutorials and Webinars", and "MeSH Vocabulary", with a sub-link "Introduction to MeSH" under the last one.

Searching the literature

Research Tip

Use both **keyword searching** AND **subject searching** to get better results:

1. Start your search with keyword searching; use your own words that describe your topic best.
2. After getting results, focus on the most relevant record(s), and among subject headings, presented in them; choose the most suitable ones for your topic. In some databases subject headings can also be called “terms” or “descriptors”.
3. Now is the time to turn to subject headings for your further search.

How to Find Keywords	How to Find Subject Headings
think of any words that describe your topic; use alternate words and synonyms to describe the same idea	catalogs and databases usually provide lists of the subject headings preferred for searching, sometimes called “thesaurus”
start with just a few terms; the more terms you add, the more you narrow your possible results	consult printed multi-volume set of Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), ask Reference Librarian for help

Searching the literature

Define your Topic

A good library research topic usually contains 2-3 concepts. It is often in the form of a research question or statement.

Topics with only 1 concept or many concepts are hard to research.

Look at these examples for how to break a topic into concepts. We will use the concepts as keywords. See how the outcome changes when you have more or fewer concepts in a search topic:

Topic	Number of Concepts	Outcome
Good: Impact of obesity on the development of Type II Diabetes	obesity and Type II Diabetes= 2	34 results in CINAHL Plus with Full Text database
Good: How do high school dropouts rate their self-efficacy?	high school and dropouts and self-efficacy= 3	16 results in ERIC database
Bad: Obesity	Obesity= 1	12,451 results in CINAHL Plus with Full Text database
Bad: Do conflicts with 9th grade homeroom teachers result in students in Boston dropping out of school?	9th grade and homeroom and teachers and students and Boston and drop out= 6	0 results in ERIC database

Searching the literature

Why Use Boolean?

Boolean terms (sometimes called Boolean operators, or command terms) connect your keywords to create a logical phrase that the database can understand. This may involve forcing the database to look for multiple terms/concepts at once, which will make your search more precise -- or you may allow the database to search for alternative terms that will bring back more results.

This creates a more precise and powerful search, with a higher percentage of relevant results.

This page will show you how to use the Boolean Terms AND, OR, and NOT in your searches.

Boolean Terms: AND, OR, NOT

Boolean Term	What it Does	How to Use
AND	Finds items that use BOTH keywords.	adult learning AND online courses
OR	Finds items that use EITHER of the keywords.	adult learners OR adult students
NOT	EXCLUDES items that use the keyword(s).	NOT masters programs

Note: You do not have to capitalize and, or, and not in your searches.

Searching the literature

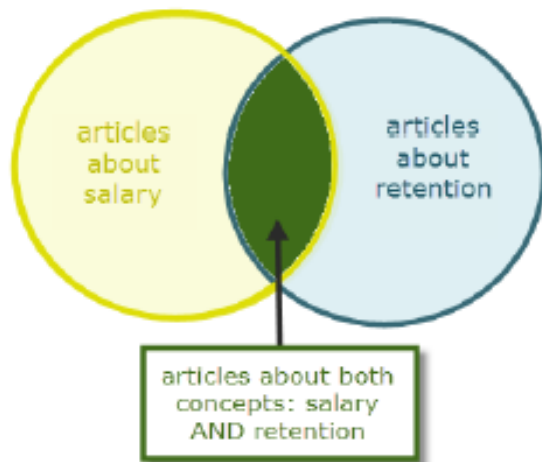
AND

The AND operator:

- connects different concepts
- limits your search
- reduces results

Example:

salary AND retention



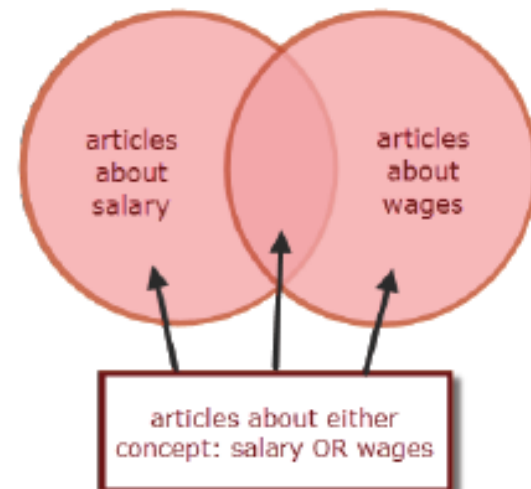
OR

The OR operator:

- finds different ways to phrase a concept
- expands your search
- increases results

Examples:

salary OR wages



Searching the literature

NOT

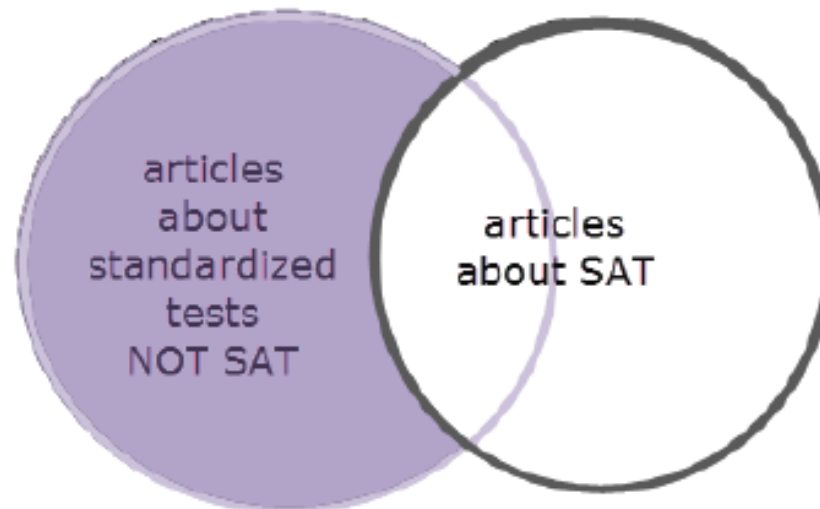
The NOT operator:

- excludes results with the keyword
- reduces results

Example:

standardized test NOT SAT

WARNING: Use NOT with caution. It can remove relevant results.



Searching the literature

Truncate Root Words

Truncation allows you to search any ending on a root word.

For example, if your topic uses the word teenagers, then you may also want to search:

- teen
- teens
- teenager

The root word is teen. To truncate and search teen with any ending you would type:

teen*

The asterisk at the end of the root word tells the database to search for that word with any ending.

This expands your search to find more articles.

Searching the literature: google scholar



The screenshot shows the Google Scholar interface. At the top, the search bar contains the text "tumor necrosis factor combination therapy" and a search button. Below the search bar, the results are displayed. On the left side, there is a navigation menu with a hamburger icon and a blue arrow pointing to it. The menu items are "Articoli" (Articles) and "Advanced search:". Below the menu, there are several options for filtering and sorting the results, including "In qualsiasi momento" (Any time), "Dal 2017", "Dal 2016", "Dal 2013", "Intervallo specifico...", "Ordina per pertinenza" (Sort by relevance), and "Ordina per data" (Sort by date). The main search results area shows a single result with the title "Therapeutic efficacy of multiple intravenous infusions of anti-tumor necrosis factor α monoclonal antibody combined with low-dose weekly methotrexate in rheumatoid ..." and the authors "RN Maini, FC Breedveld, JR Kalden...". The result is sorted by relevance.

Advanced search:

Search done by relevance, not by date. To have the newest results use the bar on the left

To search by author, type : author "name"

To search by title: "Title of the article"

Searching the literature: google scholar

The advanced search allows you to search more precisely.

Use the **articles dated between** to limit to specific years.

Try the **authored by** search box to see resources by a specific author

Explore the other search options to see what's most effective for your search:



Find articles ×

with **all** of the words

with the **exact phrase**

with **at least one** of the words

without the words

where my words occur **anywhere in the article** ↕

Return articles **authored by**
e.g., "PJ Hayes" or McCarthy

Return articles **published in**
e.g., J Biol Chem or Nature

Return articles **dated between** —
e.g., 1996

Searching the literature in PubMed

PubMed is the **definitive source for literature related to health**. This includes topics in biology, environmental science, public health, neuroscience, and so forth – it's a very large, broad database.

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PubMed.gov US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health

PubMed Search

Advanced Help



PubMed

PubMed comprises more than 27 million citations for biomedical literature from MEDLINE, life science journals, and online books. Citations may include links to full-text content from PubMed Central and publisher web sites.

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[Clinical Trials](#)

[E-Utilities \(API\)](#)

[LinkOut](#)

Latest Literature

New articles from highly accessed journals

[Ann N Y Acad Sci \(1\)](#)

[Cell \(9\)](#)

[Cochrane Database Syst Rev \(6\)](#)

Trending Articles

PubMed records with recent increases in activity

Gut microbiome influences efficacy of PD-1-based immunotherapy against epithelial tumors. Science. 2017.

Gut microbiome modulates response to anti-PD-1

PubMed Commons

Featured comments

Unpublished data in systematic reviews: E Turner (@eturnermd1) suggests follow-up study to examine how data are used. bit.ly/2hFZICT

Nov 6

Searching the literature in PubMed



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Search

Databases

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Explore NLM

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NLM Customer Support



PubMed Tutorial

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[Review](#)

Understanding the Vocabulary

MEDLINE uses a controlled vocabulary, meaning that there is a specific set of terms used to describe each article. Familiarity with this vocabulary will make you a better PubMed searcher.

The Medical Subject Headings (MeSH®)

MeSH is the acronym for "Medical Subject Headings." MeSH is the authority list of the vocabulary terms used for subject analysis of biomedical literature at NLM. MeSH vocabulary is used for indexing journal articles for MEDLINE and is also used for cataloging books and audiovisuals.

The MeSH controlled vocabulary is a distinctive feature of MEDLINE. It imposes uniformity and consistency to the indexing of biomedical literature. MeSH terms are arranged in a hierarchical categorized manner called MeSH Tree Structures and are updated annually.

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- Understanding the Vocabulary**
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The MeSH Tree Structure

MeSH vocabulary is organized into 16 main branches:

1. Anatomy
2. Organisms
3. Diseases
4. Chemicals and Drugs
5. Analytical, Diagnostic and Therapeutic Techniques and Equipment
6. Psychiatry and Psychology
7. Phenomena and Processes
8. Disciplines and Occupations
9. Anthropology, Education, Sociology and Social Phenomena
10. Technology, Industry, Agriculture
11. Humanities
12. Information Science
13. Named Groups
14. Health Care
15. Publication Characteristics
16. Geographicals

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Searching the literature in PubMed

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Searching the literature in PubMed

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MeSH MeSH Search

Create alert Limits Advanced Help

Summary 20 per page Send to:

Search results

Items: 1 to 20 of 380

<< First < Prev Page 1 of 19 Next > Last >>

- [Hydrolases](#)
 - Any member of the class of enzymes that catalyze the cleavage of the substrate and the addition of water to the resulting molecules, e.g., ESTERASES, glycosidases (GLYCOSIDE **HYDROLASES**), lipases, NUCLEOTIDASES, peptidases (PEPTIDE **HYDROLASES**), and phosphatases (PHOSPHORIC MONOESTER **HYDROLASES**). EC 3.
- [Glycoside Hydrolase Inhibitors](#)
 - Compounds that inhibit or block the activity of GLYCOSIDE **HYDROLASES** such as ALPHA-AMYLASES and APHA-GLUCOSIDASES.
Year introduced: 2015
- [Pyroglutamate Hydrolase](#)
 - Hydrolyzes pyroglutamic acid in the presence of ATP to glutamate plus ADP and inorganic phosphate. Deficiency leads to pyroglutamic acidurea.
Year introduced: 1991(1975)
- [gamma-Glutamyl Hydrolase](#)
 - Catalyzes the hydrolysis of pteroylpolyglutamic acids in gamma linkage to pteroylmonoglutamic acid and free glutamic acid. EC 3.4.19.9.
Year introduced: 2000(1975)

PubMed Search Builder

Add to search builder AND Search PubMed

YouTube Tutorial

Find related data Database: Select Find items

Search details "hydrolases"[MeSH Terms] OR hydrolase[Text Word] Search See more...

Searching the literature in PubMed

NCBI Resources How To Sign in to NCBI

PubMed.gov PubMed Search

US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health

Advanced Help



NCBI Resources How To Sign in to NCBI

PubMed Home More Resources Help

PubMed Advanced Search Builder

YouTube Tutorial

Use the builder below to create your search

Edit

Clear

Builder

All Fields [input] - Show index list

AND All Fields [input] - + Show index list

- Search
- Affiliation
- All Fields
- Author
- Author - Corporate
- Author - First
- Author - Full
- Author - Identifier
- Author - Last
- History
- Book
- Conflict of Interest Statements
- Date - Completion
- Date - Create
- Date - Entrez
- Date - MeSH
- Date - Modification
- Date - Publication
- EC/RN Number
- Editor
- Filter
- Grant Number

Download history Clear history

Query	Items found	Time
	3563498	05:58:34

You are here: NCBI > Literature >

GETTING STARTED
NCBI Education

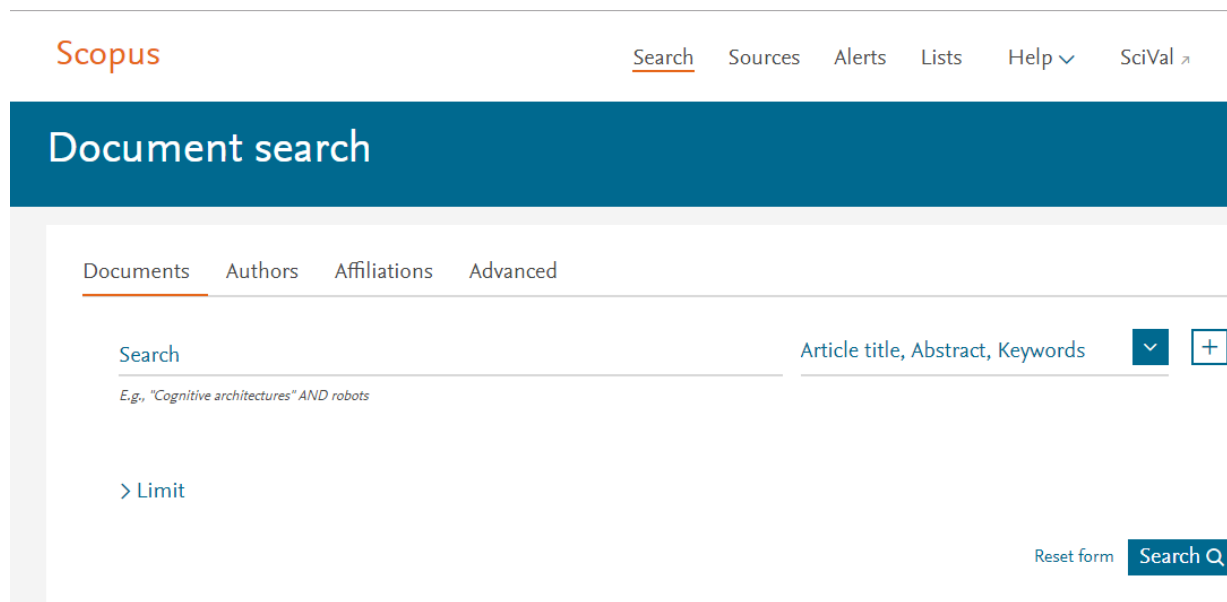
POPULAR
PubMed

FEATURED
Genetic Testing Registry

NCBI INFORMATION
About NCBI

Support Center

Searching the literature in scopus



The screenshot shows the Scopus search interface. At the top left is the Scopus logo. To the right are navigation links: Search (underlined), Sources, Alerts, Lists, Help (with a dropdown arrow), and SciVal (with a right arrow). Below this is a dark blue header with the text "Document search". Underneath is a horizontal menu with "Documents" (underlined), "Authors", "Affiliations", and "Advanced". The main search area contains a search input field with the placeholder text "Search" and a sample query "E.g., 'Cognitive architectures' AND robots". To the right of the input field is a dropdown menu currently set to "Article title, Abstract, Keywords" and a plus icon in a square box. Below the input field is a link "> Limit". At the bottom right of the search area are two buttons: "Reset form" and "Search" (with a magnifying glass icon).

Scopus is the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature, with bibliometrics tools to track, analyze and visualize research. It contains over 22,000 titles from more than 5,000 publishers around the world, covering the fields of science, technology, medicine, social sciences, and Arts & Humanities. Scopus has 55 million records dating back to 1823, 84% of these contain references dating from 1996.

www.elsevier.com/scopus

Searching the literature in scopus

1 Documents

This tab is the main search window of the homepage. To begin, enter the search terms in the space provided. (see page 8 for input rules for search terms).

2 Authors

Choose the Author tab to search for a specific author by name or by ORCID (Open Research and Contributor Identifier) ID.

3 Affiliations

Choose the *Affiliation* tab to search for a specific affiliation.

4 Search Items

Select which fields you wish to search.

5 Add search field

Click on the “+” button to add a search field using multiple keywords (See bullet 6).

6 Boolean Operators

Select from AND, OR, AND NOT to combine search terms.

7 Limit to Section

Click on the “Limit” drop down link to control search by limiting to: published years, recently added, document type and subject areas.

8 Search History

When you return to the search window after carrying out a search, your search history will be displayed at the bottom. The search history is cleared for each new session.

9 Set Alerts or RSS Feeds

Hover over a search result in *Search history* and click on the icons that appear. *Set alert* (to receive email alerts), *Set feed* (to receive RSS updates), *Save query*, *Edit query*, or *Delete query*.

The screenshot shows the Scopus Document search interface. At the top, there are navigation links for Search, Sources, Alerts, Lists, Help, Register, and Login. The main search area is titled 'Document search' and has tabs for Documents, Authors, Affiliations, and Advanced. The 'Documents' tab is selected. There are three search input fields, each with a dropdown menu for search criteria (e.g., 'Article title, Abstract, Keywords') and a '+' button to add more search fields. Below the search fields, there are options for Boolean operators (AND, OR, AND NOT) and a 'Limit' dropdown menu. The 'Limit' menu is open, showing options for 'Date range (Inclusive)' (Published, All years, to Present), 'Added to Scopus in the last' (7 days), and 'Document type' (ALL). At the bottom, there is a 'Search history' section with two entries: '11 TITLE-ABS-KEY (heart attack)' with 30,070 document results, and '10 TITLE-ABS-KEY (stress)' with 1,971,498 document results. There are icons for setting alerts, RSS feeds, saving queries, editing queries, and deleting queries. The interface also includes a 'Reset form' button and a 'Search' button.

10 Sources

Search and browse sources (journals, book series, conference proceedings and trade publications) and access CiteScore, SJR and SNIP metrics for free.

11 Alerts

Login with your credentials to receive email alerts to stay up to date with the latest developments.

12 Help, tutorials and help desk

On the help page you can find pages explaining all the features in Scopus and watch tutorials. Use the live chat to ask the helpdesk for assistance.

13 Register

Personalize your Scopus experience.

Searching the literature in scopus

Document search

[Compare sources >](#)

[Documents](#) [Authors](#) [Affiliations](#) [Advanced](#)

[Search tips ?](#)

Search

E.g., "Cognitive architectures" AND robots

Limit

Date range (inclusive)

Published All years to Present

Added to Scopus in the last 7 days

Document type

ALL

Article title, Abstract, Keywords

All fields

Article title, Abstract, Keywords

Authors

First author

Source title

Article title

Abstract

Keywords

[Reset form](#)

[Search](#)



Learn more about how to
Improve Scopus

Searching the literature in scopus

1 Set Alert

Notifies you by email or RSS feed when a new article that matches your search conditions is listed (requires login).

2 Analyze Search Results

Click to see an analysis of your results, showing the number of documents broken down by various criteria, including year, source, author, affiliation, and so on.

3 Number of Search Results

Displays the number of documents results.

4 Search within Results

Add additional terms to your search by directly entering them here.

5 Refine Results

Use the *Refine Results* pane to limit your results list to certain categories of documents. For example, you can limit the display to documents from a certain author, or those published in a certain year. You can also exclude certain documents from the results list.

6 Batch Processing Results

Export bibliographic information using reference managers Mendeley or RefWorks, or in file formats RIS, CSV, BibTex or Text. If you use RefWorks, you can add your RefWorks ID/PW to seamlessly link Scopus and RefWorks. Click on the ☰ in the navigation bar and go to *Export and reference management settings* found under the *Personal profile access menu*.

Download multiple PDF files and automatically assign them names based on specified rules. The file names can be a combination of author, publication year, article title, journal, and more. The maximum number of files you can download at one time is 50 if PDF is available. Firefox or IE 9, 10, 11 required.

View citation overview to analyze documents that cite the selected articles.

View cited by displays all documents that cite the selected articles.

The screenshot shows the Scopus 'Document search results' interface. At the top, the search title is 'TITLE-ABS:KEY (heart attack)'. The results count is 30,180. The interface includes a search bar, a 'Refine' pane on the left with filters for Year, Author Name, and Subject Area, and a list of search results on the right. Numbered callouts (1-10) point to specific features: 1. Set Alert icon; 2. Analyze search results button; 3. Document count; 4. Search within results input; 5. Refine filters; 6. Export/Download buttons; 7. Document title; 8. Author name; 9. Source title; 10. More options menu.

Add to List adds the articles to a temporary list.

Later, you can find them from the *Lists* menu or save the list under a new name.

More (see bullet 10)

7 Display Document Details Page

Click the article title to view the document details (the abstract and referenced works) of the article. Hovering over a search result will show the following links:

- Full text on each publisher's website if authorized
- Show abstract
- Related documents

8 Author details

Click on an author's name to see the author profile and a list of his/ her documents.

9 Source details

Click on a document's source title to view the source details, including Scopus journal metrics.

10 More

View references displays all documents referenced by the article(s).

Create bibliography change the output to the typical reference list format.

Email allows you to send articles as an email.

Print displays articles in a format suited for printing.

Searching the literature in scopus

Scopus

Search

Sources

Alerts

Lists

Help ▾

SciVal ↗

Document search

Documents

Authors

Affiliations

Advanced

Search

use of hydrolases for the kinetic resolution of amino acids

×

Article title, Abstract, Keywords

▾

+

E.g., "Cognitive architectures" AND robots

> Limit

Reset form

Search Q

71 document results

[View secondary documents](#)

[View 1976 patent results](#)

[View 60 DataSearch](#)

TITLE-ABS-KEY (use AND of AND hydrolases AND for AND the AND kinetic AND resolution AND of AND amino AND acids)

 Edit



Save



Set alert



Set feed

Searching the literature in scopus

Document search

Compare sources >

Documents Authors Affiliations Advanced

Search tips ?

Search
hydrolase

E.g., "Cognitive architectures" AND robots

×

Article title, Abstract, Keywords



AND



Search
kinetic resolution

×

Article title, Abstract, Keywords



AND



Search
amino acid

×

Article title, Abstract, Keywords



Scopus

Search

Sources

Alerts

Lists

Help ▾

SciVal ↗

⌵

71 document results

(TITLE-ABS-KEY (hydrolases) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (kinetic AND resolution) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (amino AND acid))

Searching the literature in scopus

108 document results

[View second](#)

(TITLE-ABS-KEY (hydrolase*) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (kinetic AND resolution) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (amino AND acid))

 Edit  Save  Set alert  Set feed

116 document results

[View secondary documents](#) [View 36](#)

(TITLE-ABS-KEY (hydrolase*) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (kinetic AND resolution) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (desymmetrization) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (amino AND acid))

 Edit  Save  Set alert  Set feed

Scopus

[Search](#)

[Sources](#)

[Alerts](#)

[Lists](#)

[Help](#) 

[SciVal](#) 

110 document results

[View secondary docu](#)

(TITLE-ABS-KEY (hydrolase*) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (kinetic AND resolution) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (desymmetrization) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("amino acid

 Edit  Save  Set alert  Set feed

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112 document results

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