1. Subject Headings

Example: You would like to find the subject heading for lung cancer.

**PubMed:** “Lung Neoplasms”[MesH]

**CINAHL:** MH “Lung Neoplasms”

**Embase:** ‘lung cancer’/de
Keep in mind:

- Every database is different. Some may only offer the broader category that encompasses your concept, while others may offer only very specific sub-categories. Make sure you read definitions and scope notes so you can understand and properly choose the best subject heading for your concept.

2. Explosion & Mapping

Explosion: If a term has any more specific, or narrower, index terms within the subject heading hierarchy, they are also automatically retrieved.

**PubMed**: explosion is automatically carried out when searching a MeSH heading, unless you specify not to.

Example: “Lung Neoplasms”[MeSH: NoExp]

![PubMed Explosion Example](image1)

**CINAHL**: you have to select the “explode option” once you have found and selected the CINAHL heading of your choice.

Example: MH “Lung Neoplasms +”

![CINAHL Explosion Example](image2)
**Embase**: explosion can be carried out either through selection of the extensive search option, or by using a field command with the desired key word as demonstrated below.

Example: ‘lung cancer’/exp

**Embase Mapping**: A word or phrase is automatically matched (or mapped) to its corresponding Emtree thesaurus term, and the search is done in all index fields for the controlled term used by indexers. You can select this option alongside explosion by checking off the extensive searching function.

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3. **Syntax**

In addition to databases having different subject headings, they also have different ways to ask a question. Here are a few commonly used functions in databases, and how they differ in syntax.

Keep in mind:

- Carry over your keywords from the first search you have performed. Although one of your keywords may end up being a subject heading in the new database, still use it as a keyword as well to maintain a comprehensive search.
a) Title & Abstract

**PubMed:** [Title/Abstract] or [tiab]

Example: hypertension[Title/Abstract] or hypertension [tiab]

**CINAHL:** TI and AB – It is important to note that you cannot search title & abstract together in this database; they have to be searched separately.

Example: TI hypertension OR AB hypertension

**Embase:** :ti,ab

Example: hypertension:ti,ab

b) Proximity Operators

**PubMed:** PubMed does not use proximity operators

**CINAHL:** N

Example: hypertension N2 treatment
hypertension N2 (treatment OR therapy OR medication)

**Embase:** NEAR/3

Example: hypertension NEAR/3 treatment
hypertension NEAR/3 (treatment OR therapy OR medication)
c) Truncation

PubMed: You can truncate keywords and phrases in PubMed

Example: hypertension treatment* ✓
          hypertension* ✓

*You can truncate words in a multiple word search, however you cannot truncate within a phrase that has quotation marks. PubMed will at times turn a multiple word search into a phrase search (instead of looking for each term independently with AND), however this does not happen every time. Be sure to check your search details to see how PubMed is searching for the words you entered.

CINAHL: You can truncate keywords and phrases in CINAHL

Example: “hypertension treatment*” ✓
          hypertension* ✓

Embase: You can truncate words in Embase, however you cannot truncate within a phrase.

Example: “hypertension treatment*”
          “hypertension treatment” OR “hypertension treatments” ✓
          hypertension* ✓

Note: Although the previous examples are demonstrations of how to use truncation, for something like “hypertension treatment”, it may be more helpful to use proximity operators.
d) Text-word Search

**PubMed: [tw]**

Includes all words and numbers in the title, abstract, other abstract, MeSH terms, MeSH Subheadings, Publication Types, Substance Names, Personal Name as Subject, Corporate Author, Secondary Source, Comment/Correction Notes, and Other Terms.

Example: stroke[tw]

**CINAHL: TX**

In CINAHL, this command searches for keywords in all indexed fields. Also searches in full text of article.

Example: TX stroke

**Embase:** You select the “also search as free text” option in the advanced search. This will search all fields, including indexed fields, for your entered term.

![Search Interface](image)
4. Combining Searches

PubMed:
Where – Advanced search
How – Selecting “Add” next to each of your searches, using the drop down options in the builder to select either “AND” or “OR”.

CINAHL:
Where – Select “Search History”
How – Select searches you wish to combine, and choose to either “Search with AND” or “Search with OR”.
Embase:

Where – In your search history, which is automatically displayed with your results.
How – Select searches you want to combine, select either “combine using AND” or “combine using OR”.