

Guide to proximity searching

1. Ovid

Syntax:

ADJ n (ADJ = adjacency)

Usage:

n specifies the number of words either search term is from the other search term in any order.

Examples:

diabetes ADJ1 health = diabetes **health** *or* **health** diabetes
diabetes ADJ2 health = diabetes **x health** *or* **health x** diabetes
diabetes ADJ3 health = diabetes **x x health** *or* **health x x** diabetes

Notes:

“ADJO” defaults to “ADJ”. This is the same as searching two words in “inverted commas”, e.g.

diabetes ADJ health = “diabetes health”.

As such, when using ADJ without specifying a number, the order of the search terms is retained.

For more info see: <https://ospguides.ovid.com/OSPguides/medline.htm>

2. EBSCO

Syntax:

N n (N = Near)

W n (W=Within)

Usage:

N searches for instances of the search terms in any order;
W searches for instances of the search terms in the specified order;
 n specifies number of words between the search terms.

Examples:

diabetes N0 health = diabetes health *or* health diabetes
diabetes N1 health = diabetes **x health** *or* health **x** diabetes
diabetes W1 health = diabetes **x** health

For more info see: https://connect.ebsco.com/s/article/How-do-I-create-a-proximity-search?language=en_US

3. ProQuest

Syntax:

near/ n (or n/n)

pre/ n (or p/n)

Usage:

“near” searches for instances of the search terms in any order;

“pre” searches for instances of the search terms in the specified order;
n specifies number of words between the search terms;
If *n* isn’t specified it is set to 4 by default.

Examples:

diabetes near/0 health = diabetes health *or* health diabetes
diabetes n/0 health = diabetes health *or* health diabetes
diabetes near/1 health = diabetes **x** health *or* health **x** diabetes
diabetes pre/1health = diabetes **x** health

Notes:

When using “near”, although search terms are not kept in the specified order, instances where the search terms are in specified order are prioritised in the search results, i.e. the records with the specified order of search terms will be clustered towards the top of the results.

For more info see: <https://proquest.libguides.com/proquestplatform/tips#s-lg-box-26157808>

4. Cochrane library

Syntax:

NEAR/*n*
NEXT

Usage:

n specifies the number of words either search term is from the other search term in any order;
If *n* isn’t specified it is set to 6 by default;
NEXT searches for instances of the search terms next to each other and in specified order (same as using “inverted commas”).

Examples:

diabetes NEAR/1 health = diabetes **health** *or* **health** diabetes
diabetes NEAR/2 health = diabetes **x health** *or* **health x** diabetes
diabetes NEXT health = **diabetes health**

For more info see Section 3.5 in the Technical Supplement to Chapter 4: Searching for and Selecting Studies: <https://training.cochrane.org/technical-supplement-chapter-4-searching-and-selecting-studies-v63>

5. Web of Science

Syntax:

near/*n*

Usage:

Searches for instances of the search terms in any order;
n specifies number of words between the search terms;
If *n* isn’t specified it is set to 15 by default.

Examples:

diabetes near/0 health = diabetes health *or* health diabetes
diabetes near/1 health = diabetes **x** health *or* health **x** diabetes

For more info see:

http://images.webofknowledge.com/WOKRS58B4/help/WOS/hs_search_operators.html#dsy862-TRS_proximity

6. PubMed

Syntax:

“search terms” [field:~N]

Usage:

Searches for instances of the search terms specified within quotation marks in any order;

Field is limited to Title or Title/Abstract fields;

n specifies number of words between the search terms;

Wildcards and phrase searching are not supported.

Examples:

“diabetes health”[Title/Abstract:~0] = diabetes health *or* health diabetes

“diabetes health”[Title/Abstract:~1] = diabetes *x* health *or* health *x* diabetes

For more info see:

https://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/techbull/nd22/nd22_pubmed_proximity_search_available.html

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