# The InterTASC Information Specialists' Sub-Group Search Filter Resource (SFR)

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https://sites.google.com/a/york.ac.uk/issg-search-filters-resource/home

## What is the Search Filter Resource?

The ISSG Search Filter Resource (SFR) brings together search filters so that librarians and information specialists engaged in searching can easily identify relevant filters to incorporate into their search strategies. This can save time and effort designing searches and lead to more efficient searches.

## What are search filters?

Search filters are collections of search terms designed to retrieve selections of records from bibliographic databases and other sources[1]. While some filters are designed to retrieve records of specific study designs such as randomised controlled trials or systematic reviews, others aim to retrieve records relating to other features or topics such as the age or gender of research study participants.

Search filters may be designed to be sensitive (to find as many relevant records as possible), precise (to find as few irrelevant records as possible) or balanced between sensitivity and precision (finding a large proportion of relevant records but with as few irrelevant records as possible).

The design of search filters should ideally be approached as a research exercise and the resulting filters should be presented with data on their performance in finding relevant records so that we are able to judge their suitability for use[2].

## When would you use a search filter?

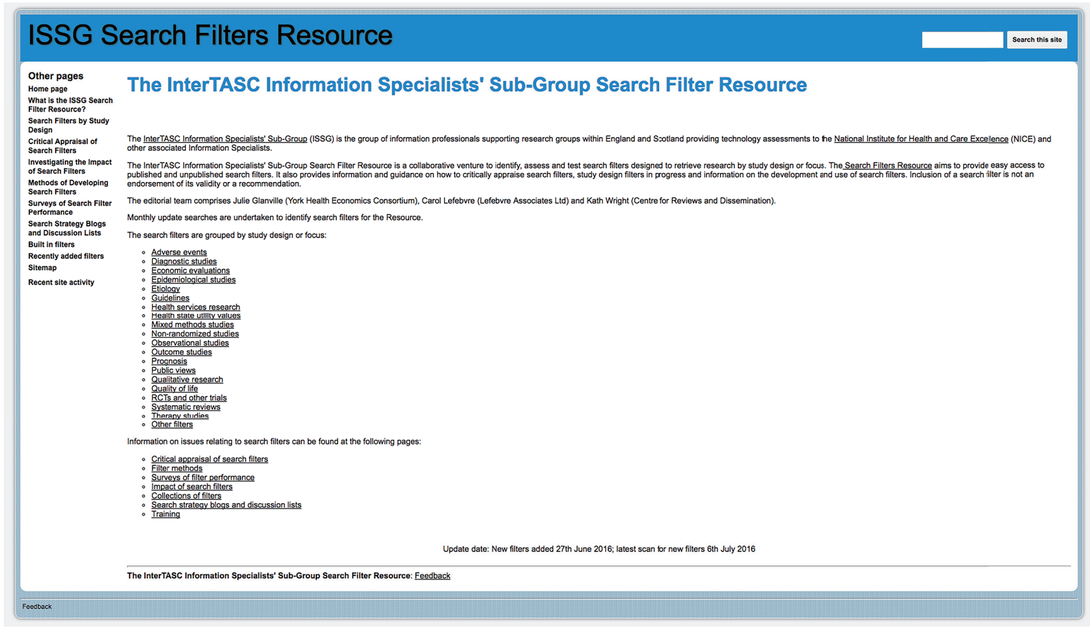
Search filters are usually combined with the results of a subject search using the AND operator (see Figure 1). [Note that in Figure 1, for brevity, a single search term has been used to indicate the search strategy for breast cancer. In actual use, the full search strategy for breast cancer would be listed here and the RCT filter would be appended at the end].

Ovid MEDLINE(R) <1946 to July Week 1 2016>

1 Breast Cancer/ (242730)
2 randomized controlled trial.pt. (423952)
3 controlled clinical trial.pt. (91212)
4 randomized.ab. (320587)
5 placebo.ab. (162292)
6 clinical trials as topic.sh. (178175)
7 randomly.ab. (225589)
8 trial.ti. (140236)
9 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 (967384)
10 exp animals/ not humans.sh. (4276333)
11 9 not 10 (885408)
12 1 and 11 (18892)

**Figure 1.**

When used in this way, a well-chosen search filter should reduce the number of irrelevant records retrieved. Consequently, the number of records that need to be assessed for relevance to the search question should be reduced[3]. Search filters are not yet available for all study types or all databases or all database interfaces.



ISSG Search Filters Resource

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The InterTASC Information Specialists' Sub-Group Search Filter Resource

The InterTASC Information Specialists' Sub-Group (ISSG) is the group of information professionals supporting research groups within England and Scotland providing technology assessments to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and other associated Information Specialists.

The InterTASC Information Specialists' Sub-Group Search Filter Resource is a collaborative venture to identify, assess and test search filters designed to retrieve research by study design or focus. The Search Filters Resource aims to provide easy access to published and unpublished search filters. It also provides information and guidance on how to critically appraise search filters, study design filters in progress and information on the development and use of search filters. Inclusion of a search filter is not an endorsement of its validity or a recommendation.

The editorial team comprises Julie Glanville (York Health Economics Consortium), Carol Lefebvre (Lefebvre Associates Ltd) and Kath Wright (Centre for Reviews and Dissemination).

Monthly update searches are undertaken to identify search filters for the Resource.

The search filters are grouped by study design or focus:

- Adverse events
- Diagnostic studies
- Economic evaluations
- Epidemiological studies
- Etiology
- Guidelines
- Health services research
- Health state utility values
- Mixed methods studies
- Non-randomized studies
- Observational studies
- Outcome studies
- Prognosis
- Public views
- Qualitative research
- Quality of life
- RCTs and other trials
- Systematic reviews
- Therapy studies
- Other filters

Information on issues relating to search filters can be found at the following pages:

- Critical appraisal of search filters
- Filter methods
- Surveys of filter performance
- Impact of search filters
- Collections of filters
- Search strategy blogs and discussion lists
- Training

Update date: New filters added 27th June 2016; latest scan for new filters 6th July 2016

The InterTASC Information Specialists' Sub-Group Search Filter Resource: Feedback

Feedback

## What is the coverage of the Search Filter Resource?

The content of the ISSG SFR is grouped by study design or focus. It includes, for example, sections on filters for adverse events, diagnostic accuracy studies, qualitative research and RCTs. It currently lists over 170 documents describing search filters or search filter methodology. This makes it the first resource to search when trying to identify a search filter to incorporate into a search strategy.

## How is the Search Filter Resource produced?

Articles reporting search filters are identified by searching MEDLINE, Embase and CINAHL on a weekly basis and by scanning e-mail discussion lists. Search results are assessed by two members of the editorial team (JG and KW) and new search filters that are identified are added to the relevant section of the ISSG SFR website.

## Can you contribute?

Yes!

If you know of search filters that are not already on the website please send details to us at: julie.glanville@york.ac.uk

We also welcome critical appraisals of filters (https://sites.google.com/a/york.ac.uk/issg-search-filters-resource/issg-search-filter-checklist-proforma)

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### References

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