



Table 9: PRESS 2015 Evidence-Based Checklist

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| <p>Translation of the research question</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the search strategy match the research question/PICO? • Are the search concepts clear? • Are there too many or too few PICO elements included? • Are the search concepts too narrow or too broad? • Does the search retrieve too many or too few records? (Please show number of hits per line.) • Are unconventional or complex strategies explained? |
| <p>Boolean and proximity operators (these vary based on search service)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are Boolean or proximity operators used correctly? • Is the use of nesting with brackets appropriate and effective for the search? • If NOT is used, is this likely to result in any unintended exclusions? • Could precision be improved by using proximity operators (e.g., adjacent, near, within) or phrase-searching instead of AND? • Is the width of proximity operators suitable (e.g., might adj5 pick up more variants than adj2)? |
| <p>Subject headings (database-specific)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the subject headings relevant? • Are any relevant subject headings missing; e.g., previous index terms? • Are any subject headings too broad or too narrow? • Are subject headings exploded where necessary and vice versa? • Are major headings ("starring" or restrict to focus) used? If so, is there adequate justification? • Are subheadings missing? • Are subheadings attached to subject headings? (Floating subheadings may be preferred.) • Are floating subheadings relevant and used appropriately? • Are both subject headings and terms in free text (see below) used for each concept? |
| <p>Text word searching (free text)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the search include all spelling variants in free text (e.g., UK versus US spelling)? • Does the search include all synonyms or antonyms (e.g., opposites)? • Does the search capture relevant truncation (i.e., is truncation at the correct place)? • Is the truncation too broad or too narrow? • Are acronyms or abbreviations used appropriately? Do they capture irrelevant material? Are the full terms also included? • Are the keywords specific enough or too broad? Are too many or too few keywords used? Are stop words used? • Have the appropriate fields been searched; e.g., is the choice of the text word fields (.tw.) or all fields (.af.) appropriate? Are there any other fields to be included or excluded (database-specific)? • Should any long strings be broken into several shorter search statements? |
| <p>Spelling, syntax and line numbers</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any spelling errors? • Are there any errors in system syntax; e.g., the use of a truncation symbol from a different search interface? • Are there incorrect line combinations or orphan lines (i.e., lines that are not referred to in the final summation that could indicate an error in an AND or OR statement)? |
| <p>Limits and filters</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are all limits and filters used appropriately and are they relevant given the research question? • Are all limits and filters used appropriately and are they relevant for the database? • Are any potentially helpful limits or filters missing? Are the limits or filters too broad or too narrow? Can any limits or filters be added or taken away? • Are sources cited for the filters used? |

PICO = population/problem, intervention/exposure, comparison, outcome; UK = United Kingdom.