Strategies to Broaden Your Search

- Reframe your question to make it broader, more general
- User broader, more general subject headings and textwords
- Remove the least important concept from your search
- Add synonyms within each search concept (using the Boolean OR)
- In textword searches:
  - Use terms for sub-concepts of your topic – eg. disease prevention OR vaccines OR culling
  - Use the truncation symbol * at the end of word stems to retrieve word variations
    Eg: therap* retrieves therapy, therapies, therapist, therapeutic
  - Search other fields in addition to title and abstract eg. author keywords
- Use both subject heading and title/abstract textwords
- Apply fewer, or no limits to your search results

Strategies to Narrow Your Search

- Reframe your question to make it more specific
- Use more specific subject headings and textwords
- Add another concept to your search (using the Boolean AND)
- Use less or no synonyms within each search concept
- In textword searches:
  - Use fewer sub-concepts of your topic
  - Use the truncation symbol * less frequently, or not at all
  - Search only the title and abstract database fields
- Use either subject headings or textwords, but not both
- Enclose terms in double quotes to search for exact phrases eg. “pain management”
- Apply more limits to your search results

To retrieve studies from the top of the clinical evidence pyramid:

- **In PubMed**, complete your PICO search in the Advanced or MeSH Database search modes. Then:
  - For therapy studies, under Article types (top left screen)
    - For reviews select: *meta-analysis, systematic reviews*
    - For primary studies select: *randomized controlled trial*
  - For diagnosis or screening studies, type: final PICO set # AND specificity[tw]

- **In CAB Abstracts** for therapy studies
  - For reviews: Search for *systematic reviews or meta-analysis* in the SU Subjects field, then use the Boolean AND to combine this search with your final PICO search
  - For primary studies: Search for *randomized controlled trials* in the SU Subjects field, then use the Boolean AND to combine this with your final PICO search