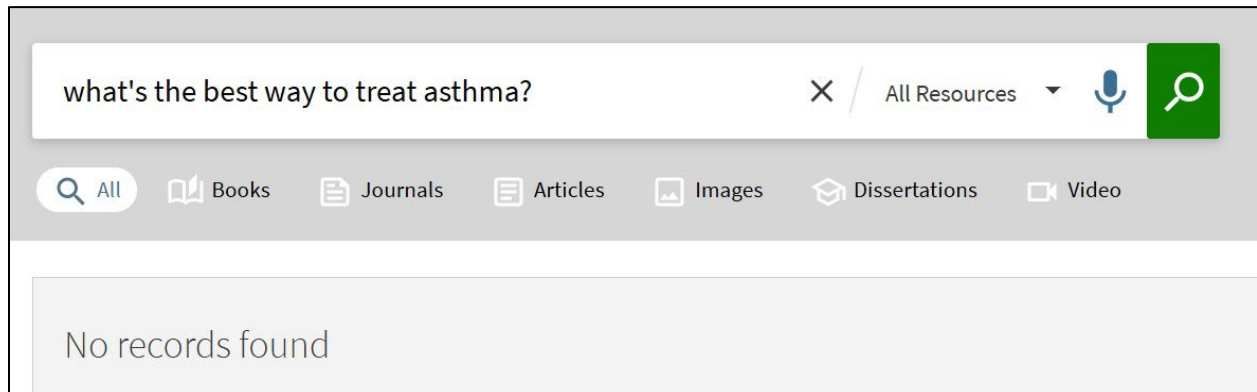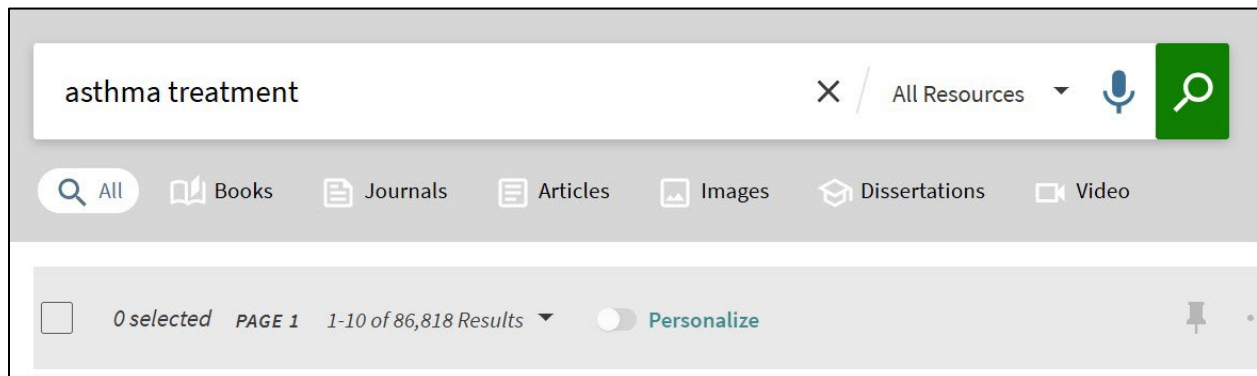**Improving Your Search**

Keywords Rather Than Questions

Search for a combination of relevant keywords rather than typing in a question as you might with Google.

For example, instead of....

Use the main keywords...

Including Synonyms and Related Terms

Consider including relevant synonyms or related terminology for a more comprehensive search.

Use a capital OR and brackets around the synonymous/related terms.

Some databases will require AND between each part of your search.

Phrase Searches

If you include any phrases in your search, you can place them in quotation marks to search for the exact phrase rather than as separate words. This can help filter out irrelevant results.

For example, "dry powder inhalers" will retrieve results with this exact phrase and not results that mention these individual words in other contexts.
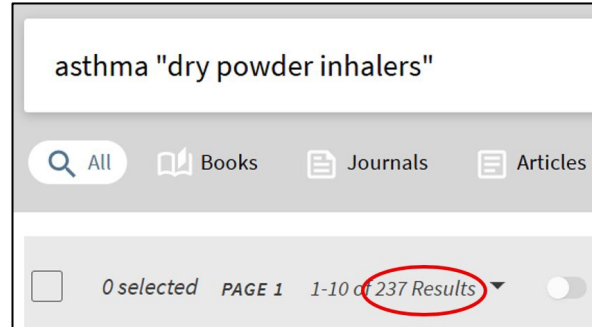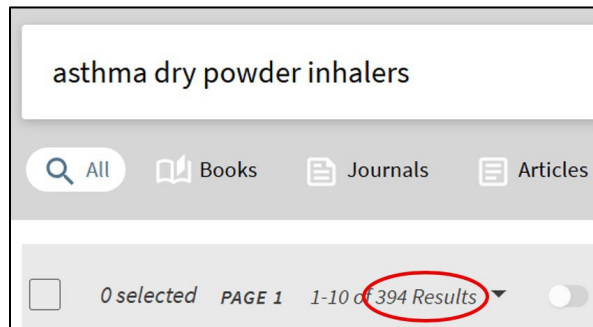
Truncation
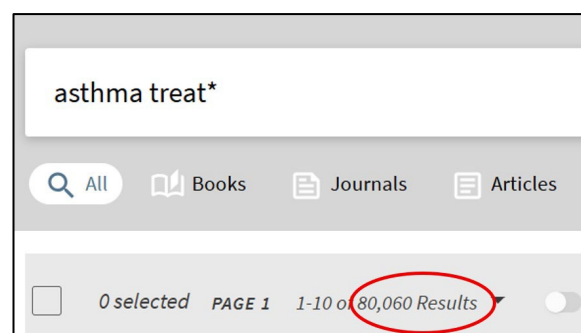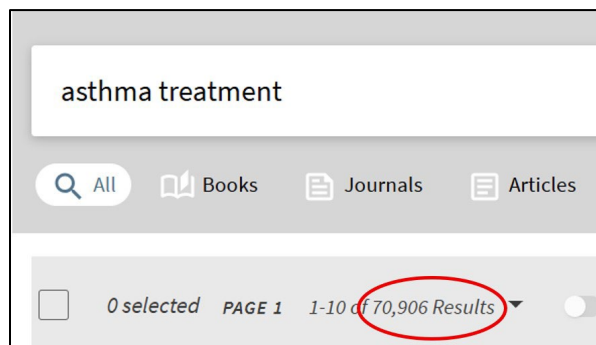
Most databases will allow you to truncate keywords that have multiple endings. The truncation symbol is usually an asterisk *
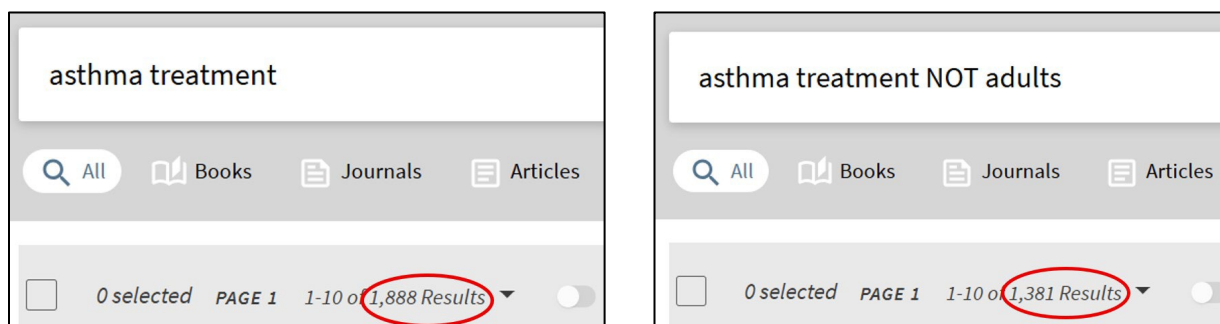
For example, using treat* will search for treat, treatment, treating, and treated. This will increase your search results.

If a database does not accept truncation, the OR function above could be used instead. For example, (treat OR treated OR treating OR treatment).

NOT – Excluding Keywords

NOT can be used to exclude results containing certain keywords.

asthma treatment	asthma treatment NOT adults
🔍 All 📖 Books 📄 Journals ☰ Articles	🔍 All 📖 Books 📄 Journals ☰ Articles
☐ 0 selected PAGE 1 1-10 of 1,888 Results ▼	☐ 0 selected PAGE 1 1-10 of 1,381 Results ▼

Please note, you can easily exclude relevant material using NOT. You may want to use an advanced search option and restrict the field (title, abstract, etc.) that NOT is applied to.

More Search Functions

Wildcard symbols are used to replace letters in a word. This is useful with words that can be spelled differently. However, the symbols and how they work are not always consistent across different databases.

For example, searching for both colour and color in EBSCO would be colo#r, whereas in ProQuest it would be colo?r, and in PubMed colo*r.

Check the help menu of the database you are using to find the appropriate symbol. A workaround is to use the OR function mentioned above to include variations of a keyword.

Proximity searching is another common function. This allows you to search for words that appear close to each other.

NEAR is often used for this. For example, *asthma NEAR/3 inflammation* would return results where inflammation occurs within three words of asthma.

The syntax for this and how it works will vary between databases, and some may not support it. Check the respective database help menu if you are unsure.

If you require any assistance with your searches, feel free to ask at the library.