



## Hints and Tips for Cost-Effective Searching on Dialog

### TRACKING YOUR CHARGES

**Know the rates for the database(s) you'll be searching:** Don't be caught by surprise! Enter the command `HELP RATES NNN` (where NNN is the file number), or consult the online Bluesheets at <http://library.dialog.com> before you start your search to make sure you know the search and output costs for the file(s) you're going to use. Some files may contain similar information at a lower cost than others.

**Monitor your costs with the `COST` and `SET NOTICE` commands:** The [COST](#) command can be entered at any time during a search session to view the estimated costs accumulated since logon. The `SET NOTICE ON` option notifies you of charges that will be incurred by an output command such as `TYPE`, `PRINT` or `XML` before the command executes if they will exceed a designated amount. The notification displays whenever the charges will exceed the system default of \$100 (or a different dollar amount that you specify) and the system asks whether you want to continue. To activate this option, enter the [SET NOTICE](#) command (e.g. `SET NOTICE 50` to set the notice to \$50.00) or in your Preferences on DialogClassic Web™, select "Output Cost Notification" and enter the dollar amount of your choice.

**Understand the difference between the DialUnits and Connect Time pricing options:** DialUnits pricing is the default on Dialog, but you have the option to change to Connect Time pricing for any particular search. DialUnits charges are based on the system resources needed to execute a search command, whereas Connect Time charges are based on the time you are logged into a particular database. All search commands such as [BEGIN](#), [EXPAND](#) and [SELECT](#) generate some DialUnits charges, but "power" search commands such as [SORT](#), [RANK](#) and [REMOVE DUPLICATES](#) use more system resources and generate higher DialUnits charges. Most non-search commands such as [HELP](#), [EDIT](#) and [SET](#) are free of DialUnits charges. For more information see the [DialUnit Pricing FAQ](#). To switch to Connect Time for a particular search, in your Preferences for Pricing Options, select "Connect Time," save your choice, then log off and log back on to activate the change.

#### DialUnits Pricing considerations:

- Charges are incurred only when you enter commands
- No cost for planning your search, consulting documentation or reviewing search results online
- Some commands generate more DialUnits charges than others
- Search charges can be difficult to estimate in advance

#### Connect Time Pricing considerations

- You must manually switch to Connect Time pricing by changing your preferences
- Charges are incurred while you are logged into a database regardless of whether you are entering commands unless the [PAUSE](#) or [LOGOFF HOLD](#) command is used
- Differences in system resources used for different commands is minimized, but some commands take longer to execute than others
- Not recommended for new or inexperienced searchers

**Use the fastest system connection available:** A speedier connection helps the system process output faster and can reduce your total charges.

## PLANNING AND EXECUTING YOUR SEARCH

**Consult Knowledge Center Search Specialists:** Knowledge Center Search Specialists are available for 24-hour support Monday through Friday to assist you with selecting the appropriate file(s) for your search, constructing your search strategy, comparing output options, and estimating costs where possible. Contact the Knowledge Center by telephone or e-mail:

- + 1 800 334 2564 (800 3DIALOG) – North America
- + 00 800 3334 2546 (800 33DIALOG) – Rest of World
- [customer@dialog.com](mailto:customer@dialog.com) or <http://www.dialog.com/contacts/webform/>

**Outline your search strategy in advance:** Consider the search terms you will use including synonyms and alternate spellings, but avoid searching on terms that overlap or are implied by other terms. Choose the most specific terms possible to avoid overly broad results or false hits.

**Use truncation with care:** Using general truncation "?" may use more system resources than a more specific truncation option. For example:

- S CAT?           <= Retrieves CAT, CATS, CATHODE, CATASTROPHY, etc.
- S CAT? ?        <= Retrieves CAT plus up to one additional character
- S CAT????      <= Retrieves CAT plus up to three additional characters
- S C?T           <= Retrieves CAT, COT, CUT, etc.
- S CAT OR CATS <= For plurals, consider searching on a term OR its plural form

**Restrict searches to key fields, especially in full-text files:** Search suffixes allow you to limit a keyword term search to key fields such as the Title (/TI), Descriptors (/DE), Lead Paragraph (/LP) or Abstract (/AB) and can be combined with a comma to limit to multiple fields (S CAT/TI,DE,AB). Consult the file Bluesheets for available suffixes and limiters.

**Restrict results to specific categories of data using limiters:** Limiters allow you to limit search terms or sets to broad categories such as Human Subject Studies (/HUMAN), English-language Records (/ENG) or records containing an Abstract (/ABS). Consult the file Bluesheets for available limiters.

**Avoid using greater than or less than symbols when limiting by date ranges:** A date search done using the greater than (>) or less than (<) symbol requires the Dialog system to work harder than when using other methods such as entering a date range (S S1 AND PY=2008:2009) or EXPANDING on PY= then SELECTing the appropriate dates from the index display. LIMITing a set to a year or year range also processes faster (S S1/2008:2009) and uses fewer system resources than using the > or < symbols.

**Save strategies on recurring topics:** You may have an ongoing research topic that you need to update from time to time. Develop a search strategy that works for you and [SAVE](#) it. Then [EXECUTE](#) it every time you need to update your research. For projects and competitive intelligence that you need to update on a periodic basis, such as weekly, bi-weekly or monthly, consider setting up current awareness ALERTS (see below).

**Use LIMITALL:** Often you begin a search knowing that you only want records that fit a certain criteria, such as publication year, or you want to qualify the entire search to descriptors, titles, lead paragraphs, or a suffix field. For example, in [D&B Dun's Market Identifiers®](#) (File 516), LIMITALL/SALES to retrieve only records that have sales information present. This effectively eliminates branch records and saves

you processing time. In a biomedical file, such as [MEDLINE®](#) (File 155) or [EMBASE®](#) (File 73), confine descriptor retrieval to major descriptors by using LIMITALL/MAJ.

**Test your strategy in a free file:** Dialog provides a number of free ONTAP® (**ON**line **T**rainin**A**nd **P**ractice) files that can be used to practice your search skills or to test your strategies in advance. See [http://training.dialog.com/sem\\_info/ontap\\_pw.html](http://training.dialog.com/sem_info/ontap_pw.html) for a complete list of available ONTAP® files.

**Use DIALINDEX® to choose the best databases and to fine-tune your search strategy:** Begin your search in [DIALINDEX® \(File 411\)](#) to identify the best databases for your search. Although you can BEGIN and search up to 60 databases, DIALINDEX is an "index of indexes" and allows you to scan several hundred databases simultaneously to determine how many hits will be retrieved by a particular search term. DIALINDEX "Supercategories" are very large groupings of files, for example ALLNEWS scans 149 files, ALLSCIENCE scans 306 files, and ALLBUSINESS scans 363 files. Consult the File 411 Bluesheet and view our At a Glance "[Using DIALINDEX®, a Database Finding Tool](#)" On-Demand Recorded Short Module for more tips on using this powerful finder file.

**Use REMOVE DUPLICATES or IDPAT to eliminate duplicate records in a multi-file search:** When searching multiple files with similar content, use the [REMOVE DUPLICATES](#) command to identify and remove duplicate records from your set. Use the [IDPAT](#) (Patent Duplicate Detection) command to identify duplicates when searching multiple patent files.

## SELECTING OUTPUT OPTIONS

**Know the rates to display records from the database(s) you'll be searching:** Consult the online Bluesheets at <http://library.dialog.com> before you enter an output command to make sure you know what the available formats and output costs are for the file(s) you're going to use.

**Use KWIC format to preview your search results:** The KWIC (Key-Word-in-Context) display format allows you to view your search terms in a "window" of text. Display records in KWIC format to determine whether your search is retrieving relevant records or to determine which records to display in a longer format. Be sure to select the "Highlight Search Terms" option in your Preferences so terms searched appear in bold-face type. The following is an example KWIC display from MEDLINE® (File 154):

```
1/K/8
DIALOG(R)File 154: MEDLINE(R)
(c) format only 2009 Dialog. All rights reserved.
```

```
... in a negative MCT could predict future occurrence of asthma over a 3-year period.
METHODS: A total of 100 consecutive patients with clinical suspicion of asthma but who
had a negative MCT per ATS FEV(1) criteria (< 20% FEV(1) decline... ..n = 55). sGaw
and FEF(25 - 75) decreases from the negative MCT could not predict asthma; however,
decreases in FEV(1) were associated with future...
```

**Use the REPORT feature:** The REPORT feature is available in TRADEMARKSCAN files, company directories, U.S. Patents Fulltext (File 652, 654), and other databases. With REPORT you can create personalized tabular output containing only the information you need. With the REPORT option, you can save money, and have a concise view of the pertinent data.

**Deliver search results via email with PRINT rather than downloading with TYPE:** Consider sending search results directly to your Internet email address with the [PRINT](#) command, rather than using [TYPE](#). Email delivery is charged at a flat 50 cents, plus the costs of the records, regardless of the number of records. Offline delivery will save not only DialUnits, but telecommunications costs and your time waiting for the records to download.

**Offload routine searches with ALERTs:** Alerts are saved searches that can be set up to run automatically and deliver the results to your desktop. ALERTs are charged at a fixed price each time they run in a database (daily, weekly, semi-monthly or monthly). The price, listed in the online file Bluesheet, includes the search and, in many files, up to 20 full documents. The Knowledge Center's Alerts Bureau can assist you in setting up ALERTs to automate your routine searches.

**Use pre-formatted templates to produce professional reports in Microsoft® Word or Excel format:** DialogLink 5 provides a library of pre-formatted report templates enabling you to produce custom reports. Save your data using the [XML](#) command, then download and export your data into the report template of your choice. [DialogClassic Web](#) users can also take advantage of the XML and XSLT commands to produce Word and Excel reports.

## DEVELOPING YOUR SEARCH EXPERTISE

**Subscribe to Dialog's e-Newsletters** - Dialog's monthly [Chronolog](#) newsletter covers new product features, content and search tips and our quarterly [Training Updates](#) newsletter highlights new training classes and resources in more depth. Subscribe at <http://support.dialog.com/publications/>.

**Attend Live Web-Based Training Classes** – Dialog offers a variety of web-based training classes in English, French and German, run by experienced trainers and content experts. View the schedule and register for classes at <http://support.dialog.com/training/remote/>.

**Review Recorded Online Courses** – Dialog offers a growing number of "On-Demand" recorded online courses that you can review at any time convenient to you. Access eLearning resources at <http://support.dialog.com/training>.

- [On-Demand Recorded Online Courses](#) – Pre-recorded courses approximately one hour each.
- [Dialog At a Glance](#) – Pre-recorded short modules on a variety of topics up to 15 minutes each.
- [Focus on Content](#) – Pre-recorded short modules highlighting key content areas and databases.

**Consult Detailed Search Tips and Aids** – Dialog provides numerous search aids such as FAQs, Quick Reference Cards and tutorials created by our experienced Content and Search Specialists. For example, our How Do I...? Series provides solutions for researching topics in business, intellectual property and scientific subject areas, including step-by-step instructions on how to find the most requested information. Access over 100 "How Do I ...?" strategies <http://support.dialog.com/howdoi/>.

### For more information:

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