

# GAO Reports Helpful Hints

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## **GAO Reports**

### **Content and File Format**

The [GAO Reports](#) databases contain reports on audits, surveys, investigations, and evaluations of Federal programs conducted by the General Accounting Office (GAO) from fiscal year 1995 through the present. All published reports, with the exception of correspondence and reports that are restricted or classified, are included. The current year's database is updated within two business days of a report's release. Reports are available as [ASCII text](#) and [Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format \(PDF\)](#) files. [1]

### **Fielded Searches**

Fielded searches allow you to make your search more specific by limiting your results by preselected elements, such as report number, title, and date. The fields for the *GAO Reports* databases are as follows:

**Report Number:** Search for a report based on its number. Be sure to enclose the entire report number in quotation marks and to include all hyphens. This type of search is not case-sensitive. See "Identification Codes" below for more information about report numbers.

**Report Title:** Search for a report based on words or phrases from its title.

**Subject Terms:** Search for a report based on subject categories assigned by GAO. This type of search is more narrow in scope than a full-text subject search.

**Report Identifiers:** Search for a report based on references to countries, states, treaties, programs, and other named things that are relevant to the subject of the report.

**Issue Date:** Search for a report based on a date range or a specific date modified by the command "on," "before," or "after."

A list of the indexing terms assigned to the fields in each report is available at the beginning of each ASCII text file.

### Maximum Responses

The maximum responses you may receive from a query is set at a default of 40. To locate a larger number of documents (up to 200), you must change the setting. All of the *GPO Access* search pages provide a box in which you may change the maximum number of returned documents. Generally, 40 responses should be adequate to retrieve the document for which you are searching. If you cannot find a desired document with the default 40 responses, you may want to try making your query more specific before expanding the number of returned documents.

### Identification Codes

In the list that displays your query results, the title of each *GAO Reports* document is preceded by an identification code. The identification code is equivalent to the report number. For example, in the listing “[RCED-99-47] National Forests: Funding the Sawtooth National Recreation Area,” “RCED-99-47” is the report number, and “National Forests: Funding the Sawtooth National Recreation Area” is the title. Report numbers include a report series abbreviation, which indicates the GAO division or office that performed the analysis. In the above example, the abbreviation “RCED” indicates that the Resources, Community, and Economic Development Division of GAO prepared the analysis for the report. Identification codes in the *GAO Reports* databases are searchable; see “Search by Report Number” below for more information.

**Note:** The “T” that precedes some identification codes (e.g., T-HEHS-98-164) indicates that a report consists of testimony before the U.S. Senate.

### Report Series Abbreviations

The report series abbreviation that comprises the first component of a report number indicates which GAO division or office performed the analysis for the report. For example, in the report number “RCED-99-47,” “RCED” is the report series abbreviation, and it stands for “Resources, Community, and Economic Development Division.” The report series abbreviations are as follows:

AIMD	Accounting and Information Management Division
GGD	General Government Division
HEHS	Health, Education, and Human Services Division
HRD	Human Resources Division
NSIAD	National Security and International Affairs Division
OCG	Office of the Comptroller General
OGC	Office of the General Counsel
OIMC	Office of Information Management and Communications
OP	Office of Policy
OPP	Office of Program Planning
OSI	Office of Special Investigations
PEMD	Program Evaluation and Methodology Division
RCED	Resources, Community, and Economic Development Division

### Sample Searches

The following sample searches are provided as guides to popular types of searches in the *GAO Reports* databases. They are performed with a date range of 1/1/98 to 12/31/98 in order to narrow the search results. [2]

## Search by Subject

This type of search returns documents that are related to a specific subject. The word(s) that you enter as your search term(s) may appear anywhere within the document. Be sure to enter this type of query in the full-text search box.

Query:            **“child care” OR “child abuse”**  
Alternative:      **child ADJ (care OR abuse)**

Results:            [HEHS-98-27] Welfare Reform: States' Efforts to Expand Child Care Programs  
                      [HEHS-98-109] Welfare Reform: States Are Restructuring Programs To Reduce  
                      [RCED-98-148] Welfare Reform: Changes Will Further Shape the Roles of  
                      (Other documents were returned that are not included here.)

A subject search entered in the full-text search box differs considerably from a search entered in the subject-terms box and thus returns a different results list. While a full-text subject search is conducted across all words in a report, a subject-terms search is restricted to predetermined subject categories that are assigned by GAO. See “Search by Subject Terms” below for a comparison.

## Search by Report Number

This type of search returns documents based on report number. The report number should be enclosed in quotation marks and entered in the report-number search box. To identify all reports in a report series, enter only the initial letters of the report number (e.g., HEHS) in the report-number search box.

Query:            **“HEHS-98-232”**

Result:            [HEHS-98-232] Elementary and Secondary Education: Flexibility Initiatives Do

**Note:** GAO control numbers (e.g., B-256567) are not searchable in the report-number field. However, a control number does appear on the cover letter that accompanies each report and, therefore, can be used as a query in the full-text search box.

## Search by Title

This type of search returns documents based on words or phrases from their titles. Be sure to enter a title query in the appropriate search box; if title words are entered in the full-text search box, the documents that are returned may contain the query terms in their titles or elsewhere in the text.

Query:            **“financial management”**

Results:            [AIMD-98-34] Financial Management: Profile of Financial Personnel in Large  
                      [AIMD-98-268] Financial Management: Federal Financial Management  
                      [T-AIMD-98-215] Financial Management: Fostering the Effective Implementation  
                      (Other documents were returned that are not included here.)

## Search by Subject Terms

This type of search returns documents based on predetermined subject categories that are assigned by GAO. Be sure to enter a query for subject terms in the appropriate search box.

Query:           **“child care” OR “child abuse”**  
Alternative:     **child ADJ (care OR abuse)**

Results:         [HEHS-98-27] Welfare Reform: States' Efforts to Expand Child Care Programs  
                  [T-HEHS-98-148] Child Care: States' Efforts to Expand Programs Under Welfare  
                  [T-HEHS-98-183] Head Start: Challenges Faced in Demonstrating Program  
                  (Other documents were returned that are not included here.)

If you are unable to find a specific report using this type of search, you may expand your results list for a given subject by entering the same query in the full-text search box. See “Search by Subject” above for a comparison.

**Note:** The subject terms assigned to a report are listed at the beginning of each [ASCII text](#) file.

## Search by Report Identifiers

This type of search returns documents based on predetermined report identifiers that are assigned by GAO. Be sure to enter a query for report identifiers in the appropriate search box.

Query:           **Maryland**

Result:         [T-HEHS-98-148] Child Care: States' Efforts to Expand Programs Under Welfare  
                  [HEHS-98-27] Welfare Reform: States' Efforts to Expand Child Care Programs  
                  [HEHS-99-8] Child Welfare: Early Experiences Implementing a Managed Care  
                  (Other documents were returned that are not included here.)

**Note:** The report identifiers assigned to a report are listed at the beginning of each [ASCII text](#) file.

## Footnotes

[1] Users with the free Adobe Acrobat Reader software can view documents as they appear in the printed version. This software is available from Adobe's Web site at the following URL:  
<http://www.adobe.com/prodindex/acrobat/readstep.html>.

[2] The results of these sample searches are described as they appear on the Web interface. The display of the results may vary for users of the WAIS client and SWAIS software.

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[Questions or comments](#) regarding this service? Contact the **GPO Access User Support Team**  
by Internet e-mail at [gpoaccess@gpo.gov](mailto:gpoaccess@gpo.gov);  
by telephone at **1-202-512-1530** or **toll-free at 1-888-293-6498**;  
or by fax at **1-202-512-1262**.