# Disentangling Questions from Query Generation for Task-Adaptive Retrieval

Yoonsang Lee Minsoo Kim Seung-won Hwang<sup>\*</sup> Seoul National University {lysianthus, minsoo9574, seungwonh}@snu.ac.kr

#### Abstract

This paper studies the problem of information retrieval, to adapt to unseen tasks. Existing work generates synthetic queries from domainspecific documents to jointly train the retriever. However, the conventional query generator assumes the query as a question, thus failing to accommodate general search intents. A more lenient approach incorporates task-adaptive elements, such as few-shot learning with an 137B LLM. In this paper, we challenge a trend equating query and question, and instead conceptualize query generation task as a "compilation" of high-level intent into task-adaptive query. Specifically, we propose EGG, a query generator that better adapts to wide search intents expressed in the BeIR benchmark. Our method outperforms baselines and existing models on four tasks with underexplored intents, while utilizing a query generator 47 times smaller than the previous state-of-the-art. Our findings reveal that instructing the LM with explicit search intent is a key aspect of modeling an effective query generator.<sup>1</sup>

### 1 Introduction

Information retrieval has significantly facilitated the process of locating relevant documents in response to user requests. With the advent of dense retrieval (Karpukhin et al., 2020), prior works have concentrated on the supervised alignment of latent spaces within query and passage encoders (Gao and Callan, 2021; Ni et al., 2021; Santhanam et al., 2021). However, this requires collecting labeled data across numerous domains, which are often unavailable. In such scenarios, where only given the target corpus, existing work focuses on zeroshot query generation to form a synthetic dataset (Cheriton, 2019; Ma et al., 2021). Representing approaches include GenQ (Thakur et al., 2021), train-

\*Corresponding author.



Figure 1: Overview of our method. Given a document, conventional zero-shot query generator generates questions, while few-shot query generator performs incontext learning with few-shot examples. In contrast, our method reflects diverse search intents utilizing metaprompts to enhance the generalizability of the query generator. Fact checking can be viewed as transaction, where the retriever determines whether the given claim is supported or not, and argument retrieval is similarly so. Citation prediction, presenting a title as the query, represents a navigational intent for a specific document, and entity retrieval exhibits a mixture of the intents.

ing a query generator using MSMARCO (Campos et al., 2016), an extensive question-answering dataset, and Promptagator-Zero (Dai et al., 2022), prompting the LLM to generate questions about the documents. While the former inadvertently generates queries in questions forms, being pretrained from MSMARCO queries in questions form, the latter intentionally does so.

We challenge the prevailing trend of equating queries with questions in training. Though question form may align with information intent, web search intents are categorized to include more diverse intents (Broder, 2002) such as *Informational*, *Navigational*, and *Transactional*. While concentrating on the first category has paid off, given the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Our code is available at https://github.com/ lilys012/metaprompt-QG.

prevalence of datasets aligned with informational intent, generalization is critical, by four non-QA datasets in BeIR (Thakur et al., 2021) tasks in Figure 1.

We thus interpret query generation task as a "compilation" of high-level intent into task-adaptive query, to reflect diverse search intents (Bonifacio et al., 2022; Asai et al., 2022; Hashemi et al., 2023). This task has been mostly delegated to in-context learning: Promptagator-Few leverages FLAN 137B (Wei et al., 2021) as a few-shot query generator to better capture the latent intent in query-document pairs. However, challenges may arise in in-context learning (Brown et al., 2020) due to small model size (Wei et al., 2022), limited context length (Li et al., 2023), or poor quality of examples (Nori et al., 2023).

To overcome the reliance on expensive fewshot examples and enable the use of small LMs as query generators, we propose EGG (Efficient Generalized Generator), which leverages meta $prompt^2$  to incorporate unique search intents. Our system comes in two model sizes: EGG-FLAN is for scenarios where the model is too small to support in-context learning, for which, we adapt instructions for diverse search intents. However, we find the LM generated queries lack sufficient diversity, thus we ensure the instruction to diversify those. In cases where the model size is just enough to support in-context learning (EGG-LLAMA), we first generate prototype queries with meta-prompt as candidates for in-context query-document pairs. Another key distinction is, we utilize retriever feedback, specifically, relevance ranking. EGG not only surpasses both zero-shot and few-shot baselines but also outperforms previous state-of-the-art methods. Our method effectively covers undersupported intents which existing methods often struggle with.

To summarize, our contributions are as follows: (1) We introduce EGG, which employs meta-prompt and retriever feedback, to integrate unique search intents into query generation. (2) Our method outperforms the baselines, demonstrating its effectiveness. (3) Despite the much smaller size of the query generator, our method achieves the highest overall performance.

Task	Intent	$e_q$
Fact Checking	Transactional	Claim
Argument Retrieval	Transactional	Argument
Citation Prediction	Navigational	Title
Entity Retrieval	Mixed	Entity

Table 1: Query description  $(e_q)$  of the tasks with underexplored search intents.

### 2 Methodology

#### 2.1 Task Formulation

Given the corpus  $D^c = \{d_i\}$  and the search intent  $e_q$ , the goal is to generate queries  $\{q_i^*\}$  that correspond well to  $e_q$ . Equipped with the synthetic pairs  $\{d_i, q_i^*\}$ , passage<sup>3</sup> and query encoders are jointly trained to align their latent embedding spaces. During inference, documents and test queries are each embedded with the trained encoders, and the top-k documents with the highest scores are retrieved.

In conventional zero-shot methods,  $e_q$  is often considered as either the term 'query' (Dai et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023; Saad-Falcon et al., 2023), or 'question' (Sachan et al., 2022a; Bonifacio et al., 2022), interchangeably. We challenge this assumption by defining  $e_q$  as query adaptive to each task, by interpreting  $e_q$  as task-specific attribute incorporated it into the meta-prompt.

#### 2.2 Dataset

BeIR is a comprehensive benchmark for zero-shot retrieval, including 9 distinct tasks. We focus on tasks that involve underexplored intents and select one dataset from each task. Specifically, we evaluate fact checking task Fever (Thorne et al., 2018), argument retrieval task Arguana (Wachsmuth et al., 2018), citation prediction task Scidocs (Cohan et al., 2020), and entity retrieval task DBPedia (Hasibi et al., 2017). We adopt  $e_q$  from the BeIR paper, as presented in Table 1.

#### 2.3 Query Generation

**EGG-FLAN** FLAN-T5 (Chung et al., 2022) is known for its strong ability to follow instructions (Sun et al., 2023). For each  $d_i$ , we employ the following meta-prompt to generate N queries  $\{q_{i_k}^*\}, k \in (1, N)$  per document: "Write a  $\{e_q\}$ related to topic of the passage. Do not directly use wordings from the passage.  $\{d_i\}$ ". Generated queries can reflect the search intent  $e_q$  through the instruction for better alignment

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Following Nayak et al. (2024), we define *meta-prompt* as the prompt that accepts a document and a task attribute as input to generate a task-adaptive query.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>We use both *document* and *passage* interchangeably.

of the retrievers. Our pilot study showed that when FLAN-T5 is prompted without specific instruction to write queries in its own words, it tends to extract the same sentence from the document as N queries, leading to worse performance. Therefore, we have added such instruction to encourage the model to attempt paraphrasing and explore various parts of the document.

Our meta-prompt incurs the same computational cost as the zero-shot prompt, which has 'query' as the task attribute. Compared to the few-shot method, meta-prompt is significantly shorter than the concatenation of few-shot examples, and even shorter than a single document, highlighting the efficiency aspect.

**EGG-LLAMA** LLMs can exhibit strong performance via in-context learning, especially when incontext examples are relevant to the given context (Liu et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2024). However, fewshot methods inevitably employ a fixed set of incontext examples, regardless of the documents. In contrast, we enable in-context learning with *proto*-*type* queries generated by meta-prompts to benefit from relevant documents. Concretely, we first generate prototype queries  $\{q'_i\}$  that align closely with the search intent of the target task, and then perform in-context learning using these relevant examples  $\{P_i\} = (d_i, q'_i)$ .

Initially, we generate one  $q'_i$  per document with Llama2 model (Touvron et al., 2023) using the following meta-prompt: "[INST] Read the passage and generate a  $\{e_q\}$ . [/INST]  $\{d_i\}$   $\{e_q\}$  :". Subsequently, we perform in-context learning on Llama2 model with  $\{P_i\}$  to obtain queries of high relevance and quality to the given document (Saad-Falcon et al., 2023). With respect to some similarity function f(i, j), we retrieve M relevant examples  $P_{i_k} = (d_{i_k}, q'_{i_k}), k \in (1, M)$  for each document. Finally, we generate  $\{q^*_{i_k}\}$  with the following template: "Passage:  $\{d_{i_1}\}$   $\{e_q\}$ :  $\{q'_{i_1}\}$ ... Passage:  $\{d_{i_M}\}$   $\{e_q\}$ :  $\{q'_{i_M}\}$  Passage:  $\{d_i\}$   $\{e_q\}$ :" Since prototype queries are tailored to  $e_q$ , we can expect  $\{q^*_{i_k}\}$  to also be aligned with  $e_q$ .

#### 2.4 Retriever Training

As we have obtained a task-specific synthetic dataset, we now train a retriever on this dataset. We employ two training frameworks: DPR (Karpukhin et al., 2020) and GPL (Wang et al., 2021). DPR maximizes the likelihood of the product between query and positive document embeddings through

		Fev.	Arg.	Sci.	Dbp.	Avg.
DPR	FLAN (zero) FLAN (few) EGG-FLAN	54.4 38.1 <b>69.5</b>	53.9 22.9 <b>60.1</b>	14.8 16.7 <b>18.6</b>	30.4 31.5 <b>33.6</b>	38.4 27.3 <b>45.5</b>
DIK	Llama2 (zero) Llama2 (few) EGG-LLAMA	60.9 67.2 67.6	59.0 <b>62.0</b> 61.2	16.0 17.5 <b>18.2</b>	<b>34.2</b> 30.2 32.5	42.5 44.2 <b>44.9</b>
GPL	FLAN (zero) FLAN (few) EGG-FLAN	73.2 77.0 <b>79.4</b>	55.8 3.5 <b>58.7</b>	14.9 16.3 <b>16.9</b>	39.6 37.7 <b>40.0</b>	45.9 33.6 <b>48.8</b>
	Llama2 (zero) Llama2 (few) EGG-LLAMA	73.0 <b>79.8</b> 78.3	56.4 55.8 <b>57.1</b>	15.0 <b>17.0</b> <b>17.0</b>	<b>40.2</b> 39.1 <b>40.2</b>	46.2 47.9 <b>48.2</b>

Table 2: Results of EGG, zero-shot, and few-shot baselines with two training methods, DPR and GPL. EGG consistently outperforms the baselines. We bold the highest score for each experiment. Fev, Arg, Sci, Dbp stand for Fever, Arguana, Scidocs, and DBPedia.

in-batch negatives, while GPL soft-labels the score of query and positive document using crossencoder and employs MarginMSE loss (Hofstätter et al., 2020).

## **3** Experiments

#### 3.1 Experimental Setup

We experiment with FLAN-T5-XL (3B) and Llama2 (7B) models, generating 8 queries per passage and showcasing 4 examples during in-context learning. For EGG-LLAMA, we use the dot product between the SimCSE (Gao et al., 2021) embeddings of  $d_i$  and  $d_j$  as f(i, j). We train a DistilBERT TAS-B (Hofstätter et al., 2021) retriever for each task.

Among unsupervised models, we benchmark against BM25, Contriever (Izacard et al., 2021), and ART (Sachan et al., 2022b). For Generationbased models, we report GenQ, GPL, and two versions of Promptagator. While Pretrain-based models are not our main focus, we also include two representatives GTR (Ni et al., 2021) and TART (Asai et al., 2022). These methods train a large retriever on massive pretrain corpus with multiple tasks but do not finetune on the target corpus. We evaluate with nDCG@10 metric, a standard measure for the BeIR benchmark. For further details, please refer to Appendix A.

#### 3.2 Baselines

Considering different pipelines in existing works, we establish zero-shot and few-shot baselines for a controlled study. Following the conventional zeroshot assumption, we define  $e_q$  as the term 'query'

		QG	retriever	Fever	Arguana	Scidocs	DBPedia	Avg.
	BM25	-	-	75.3	31.5	15.8	31.3	38.5
Unsupervised	Contriever	-	110M	68.2	37.9	14.9	29.2	37.6
	ART	-	220M	72.4	32.2	14.4	36.3	38.8
Pretrain-based	GTR-XXL	-	4.8B	74.0	54.0	16.1	40.8	46.2
F Tetrain-Dasea	TART	-	1.5B	-**	51.5	<u>18.7</u>	<u>46.8</u>	-
	GenQ	220M*	66M	66.9	49.3	14.3	32.8	40.8
	GPL	220M*	66M	75.9	55.7	16.9	38.4	46.7
	Promptagator-Zero	137B	110M	76.2	53.8	16.3	36.4	45.7
Generation-based	Promptagator-Few	137B	110M	77.0	59.4	18.5	38.0	48.2
	DPR + EGG-FLAN	3B	66M	69.5	60.1	18.6	33.6	45.5
	+ EGG-Llama	7B	66M	67.6	<u>61.2</u>	18.2	32.5	44.9
	GPL + EGG-FLAN	3B	66M	<u>79.4</u>	58.7	16.9	40.0	<u>48.8</u>
	+ EGG-Llama	7B	66M	78.3	57.1	17.0	40.2	48.2

Table 3: Model performances across four BeIR tasks in nDCG@10. QG and retriever indicates the model size of query generator and retriever. DPR+EGG-FLAN represents the retriever trained on EGG-FLAN-generated queries with DPR. Bold and underline indicate the best score among Generation-based models and all models. (\*) GenQ and GPL further finetune the generator on MSMARCO. (\*\*) Fever is included in the train corpus of TART.

to generate questions. For few-shot baseline, we employ 4-shot examples for Llama2 and 1-shot example for FLAN-T5, given its limited context size. We follow the same template used in in-context learning for EGG-LLAMA.

Fever	Arguana	Scidocs	DBPedia
61.9 (-5.7)	60.3 (-0.9)	18.0 (-0.2)	31.9 (-0.6)

# 4 Results

#### 4.1 Main Results

We compare the baselines and our method in Table 2. Both EGG-FLAN and EGG-LLAMA exhibit the highest performance among the baselines, underscoring the benefits of incorporating search intents through meta-prompts. Moreover, EGG-FLAN demonstrates a significant gain over its few-shot baseline, as small LMs may struggle to handle few-shot examples. These results indicate that the queries generated by our method effectively cater to various search intents.

While Llama2 exhibits superior baseline performance than FLAN-T5, EGG-FLAN outperforms EGG-LLAMA, despite its smaller size and lower costs. Additionally, GPL training method shows a better average score than DPR, primarily due to the gains in Fever and DBPedia. Nevertheless, EGG with DPR exhibits marginal improvements in the other two tasks.

#### 4.2 Overall Performance

Table 3 describes the overall performance. EGG-FLAN with GPL achieves the top rank overall, while EGG-LLAMA with GPL attains the second, tied with Promptagator-Few. Compared to Pretrainbased models, our method performs better on Ar-

Table 4: Results of retrievers trained with DPR on 8 prototype queries. Performance drops across all datasets compared to DPR+EGG-LLAMA. We put the difference in parenthesis and colour it red.

guana and Fever, and comparably on Scidocs, despite much smaller retriever size and fewer pretrain tasks. As Generation-based methods can adjust to unseen tasks using synthetic queries, our work suggests a promising avenue for developing a more versatile query generator.

#### 4.3 Analysis

**Ablation Study** We conduct an ablation study on the effect of in-context learning in EGG-LLAMA. We train the retriever with 8 *prototype* queries without performing in-context learning. As illustrated in Table 4, in-context learning enhances performance, especially when the generated queries are longer and in a form of sentences (claim, argument vs. title, entity).

**Qualitative Analysis** In this section, we compare EGG-generated (EGG-LLAMA) queries to other queries. As shown in Table  $5^4$ , we observe that zero-shot queries are in a question form, which is semantically far apart from gold queries. On the other hand, EGG-generated and few-shot queries demonstrate a similar form and content to the gold

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>We report full results in Table 6 in the appendix.

Dataset		Generated query
Fever	Zero-shot	Who is the author of the novel "Don Quixote"?
	Few-shot	Sancho Panza's novel Don Quixote written by Don Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra.
	EGG	Sancho Panza is a humorous and insightful character in the novel Don Quixote who provides commentary on the events of the story and offers a unique perspective on the world.
	Gold	Sancho Panza is a fictional character in a novel written by a Spanish writer born in the 17th century.
Arguana	Zero-shot	What are the ethical and environmental impacts of meat production and consumption, and how do they compare to plant-based food systems?
	Few-shot	The meat industry is not green While many vegetarians and vegans may think that their diet is environmentally friendly, the reality is that the meat industry is not green. Meat production is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, and water pollution.
	EGG	Growing crops and vegetation can also be bad for the environment due to the use of fertilisers and pesticides and the destruction of forests and wildlife habitats, as well as the inefficiency of agricultural land use in some countries.
	Gold	Being vegetarian helps the environment Becoming a vegetarian is an environmentally friendly thing to do. Modern farming is one of the main sources of pollution in our rivers. Beef farming is one of the main causes of deforestation, and as long as people continue to buy fast food in their billions, there will be a financial incentive to continue cutting down trees to make room for cattle. ()

Table 5: Examples of generated queries with different methods. We truncate too long queries due to space limit. We observe that the queries generated with our method demonstrate high similarity to gold queries, with respect to  $e_q$ .

queries. This example illustrates the efficacy of our method on par with few-shot learning, which has already demonstrated its strong performance on various tasks. Meanwhile, since Arguana retrieves counter arguments, we find EGG-generated queries semantically contradict the gold query. Exploring more specific intents may enable constructing of better synthetic queries.

#### 5 Related Work

In scenarios where only the target corpus is available (Izacard et al., 2021; Ni et al., 2021; Gao et al., 2022), existing works create synthetic labels by generating queries from documents. A common approach is to train a query generator on large QA datasets (Cheriton, 2019; Ma et al., 2021).

Recent work prompts LLMs to generate synthetic queries from documents. There has been active research on training neural rerankers with synthetic queries (Sachan et al., 2022a; Chandradevan et al., 2024; Huang and Chen, 2024). In-Pars (Bonifacio et al., 2022) performs few-shot learning, while InPars-Light (Boytsov et al., 2023) extends InPars by employing cost efficient recipes. UDAPDR (Saad-Falcon et al., 2023) generates a small number of queries using GPT-3 and iteratively generates a large number of queries with cheaper model to train rerankers. Almeida and Matos (2024) leverages small LMs to generate questions starting with common initiators, such as What, How, and When. Meanwhile, training task-adaptive retriever is underexplored, only being studied by Promptagator (Dai et al., 2022), which leverages few-shot examples to capture the latent intents, albeit at much higher computational costs.

Another line of study provides specific instructions along with the queries and builds a generalpurpose retriever (Asai et al., 2022; Oh et al., 2024; Weller et al., 2024). This involves large sizes of LLMs during inference, while our method establishes small, task-specific retrievers.

#### 6 Conclusion

In this work, we present EGG, a novel approach designed to overcome the shortcomings of previous query generation methods. We propose two designs for EGG, distinguished by their model sizes, to improve the diversity and quality of synthetic queries while effectively capturing the search intent of the task using meta-prompts. Our approach demonstrates superior performance across four tasks, suggesting a promising direction for query generation involving underexplored search intents.

# Limitations

Some tasks exhibit mixed search intents, such as DBPedia and NFCorpus (Boteva et al., 2016) datasets. While we have adopted the most representative description of the query, provided by the authors of BeIR, considering multiple candidates for  $e_q$  may augment the performance. Moreover, our study focuses on the commonly affordable sizes of LMs. We reserve the exploration of other variants of FLAN-T5 and Llama2 models to future investigations, seeking to discern their capacity to specialize in certain tasks. Lastly, utilizing a reranker instead of a retriever has demonstrated high performance (Dai et al., 2022; Bonifacio et al., 2022; Saad-Falcon et al., 2023), despite its expensive computations. The performance of our method could be further enhanced with the incorporation of the reranker.

### Acknowledgment

This work was partly supported by Korea Institute for Advancement of Technology (KIAT) grant funded by the Korea Government (Ministry of Education) (P0025681-G02P22450002201-10054408, Semiconductor-Specialized University), and Institute of Information & communications Technology Planning & Evaluation (IITP) grant funded by the Korea government (MSIT) [NO.2021-0-0268, Artificial Intelligence Innovation Hub (Artificial Intelligence Institute, Seoul National University)]

#### References

- Tiago Almeida and Sérgio Matos. 2024. Exploring efficient zero-shot synthetic dataset generation for information retrieval. In *Findings*.
- Akari Asai, Timo Schick, Patrick Lewis, Xilun Chen, Gautier Izacard, Sebastian Riedel, Hannaneh Hajishirzi, and Wen tau Yih. 2022. Task-aware retrieval with instructions. In *Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics*.
- Luiz Henrique Bonifacio, Hugo Abonizio, Marzieh Fadaee, and Rodrigo Nogueira. 2022. Inpars: Unsupervised dataset generation for information retrieval. *Proceedings of the 45th International ACM SIGIR Conference on Research and Development in Information Retrieval.*
- Vera Boteva, Demian Gholipour Ghalandari, Artem Sokolov, and Stefan Riezler. 2016. A full-text learning to rank dataset for medical information retrieval. In *European Conference on Information Retrieval*.
- Leonid Boytsov, Preksha Patel, Vivek Sourabh, Riddhi Nisar, Sayan Kundu, R. Ramanathan, and Eric Nyberg. 2023. Inpars-light: Cost-effective unsupervised training of efficient rankers. ArXiv, abs/2301.02998.
- Andrei Z. Broder. 2002. A taxonomy of web search. *SIGIR Forum*, 36:3–10.

- Tom B. Brown, Benjamin Mann, Nick Ryder, Melanie Subbiah, Jared Kaplan, Prafulla Dhariwal, Arvind Neelakantan, Pranav Shyam, Girish Sastry, Amanda Askell, Sandhini Agarwal, Ariel Herbert-Voss, Gretchen Krueger, T. J. Henighan, Rewon Child, Aditya Ramesh, Daniel M. Ziegler, Jeff Wu, Clemens Winter, Christopher Hesse, Mark Chen, Eric Sigler, Mateusz Litwin, Scott Gray, Benjamin Chess, Jack Clark, Christopher Berner, Sam McCandlish, Alec Radford, Ilya Sutskever, and Dario Amodei. 2020. Language models are few-shot learners. ArXiv, abs/2005.14165.
- Daniel Fernando Campos, Tri Nguyen, Mir Rosenberg, Xia Song, Jianfeng Gao, Saurabh Tiwary, Rangan Majumder, Li Deng, and Bhaskar Mitra. 2016. Ms marco: A human generated machine reading comprehension dataset. *ArXiv*, abs/1611.09268.
- Ramraj Chandradevan, Kaustubh D. Dhole, and Eugene Agichtein. 2024. Duqgen: Effective unsupervised domain adaptation of neural rankers by diversifying synthetic query generation.
- David R. Cheriton. 2019. From doc2query to doctttttquery.
- Hyung Won Chung, Le Hou, S. Longpre, Barret Zoph, Yi Tay, William Fedus, Eric Li, Xuezhi Wang, Mostafa Dehghani, Siddhartha Brahma, Albert Webson, Shixiang Shane Gu, Zhuyun Dai, Mirac Suzgun, Xinyun Chen, Aakanksha Chowdhery, Dasha Valter, Sharan Narang, Gaurav Mishra, Adams Wei Yu, Vincent Zhao, Yanping Huang, Andrew M. Dai, Hongkun Yu, Slav Petrov, Ed Huai hsin Chi, Jeff Dean, Jacob Devlin, Adam Roberts, Denny Zhou, Quoc V. Le, and Jason Wei. 2022. Scaling instruction-finetuned language models. *ArXiv*, abs/2210.11416.
- Arman Cohan, Sergey Feldman, Iz Beltagy, Doug Downey, and Daniel S. Weld. 2020. Specter: Document-level representation learning using citation-informed transformers. ArXiv, abs/2004.07180.
- Zhuyun Dai, Vincent Zhao, Ji Ma, Yi Luan, Jianmo Ni, Jing Lu, Anton Bakalov, Kelvin Guu, Keith B. Hall, and Ming-Wei Chang. 2022. Promptagator: Few-shot dense retrieval from 8 examples. *ArXiv*, abs/2209.11755.
- Luyu Gao and Jamie Callan. 2021. Condenser: a pretraining architecture for dense retrieval. In *Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing*.
- Luyu Gao, Xueguang Ma, Jimmy Lin, and Jamie Callan. 2022. Precise zero-shot dense retrieval without relevance labels. ArXiv, abs/2212.10496.
- Tianyu Gao, Xingcheng Yao, and Danqi Chen. 2021. Simcse: Simple contrastive learning of sentence embeddings. *ArXiv*, abs/2104.08821.

- Helia Hashemi, Yong Zhuang, Sachith Sri Ram Kothur, Srivas Prasad, Edgar Meij, and W. Bruce Croft. 2023.
  Dense retrieval adaptation using target domain description. Proceedings of the 2023 ACM SIGIR International Conference on Theory of Information Retrieval.
- Faegheh Hasibi, Fedor Nikolaev, Chenyan Xiong, Krisztian Balog, Svein Erik Bratsberg, Alexander Kotov, and Jamie Callan. 2017. Dbpedia-entity v2: A test collection for entity search. *Proceedings of the 40th International ACM SIGIR Conference on Research and Development in Information Retrieval.*
- Sebastian Hofstätter, Sophia Althammer, Michael Schröder, Mete Sertkan, and Allan Hanbury. 2020. Improving efficient neural ranking models with cross-architecture knowledge distillation. *ArXiv*, abs/2010.02666.
- Sebastian Hofstätter, Sheng-Chieh Lin, Jheng-Hong Yang, Jimmy J. Lin, and Allan Hanbury. 2021. Efficiently teaching an effective dense retriever with balanced topic aware sampling. *Proceedings of the* 44th International ACM SIGIR Conference on Research and Development in Information Retrieval.
- Chao-Wei Huang and Yun-Nung Chen. 2024. Instupr : Instruction-based unsupervised passage reranking with large language models. *ArXiv*, abs/2403.16435.
- Gautier Izacard, Mathilde Caron, Lucas Hosseini, Sebastian Riedel, Piotr Bojanowski, Armand Joulin, and Edouard Grave. 2021. Unsupervised dense information retrieval with contrastive learning. *Trans. Mach. Learn. Res.*, 2022.
- Vladimir Karpukhin, Barlas Oğuz, Sewon Min, Patrick Lewis, Ledell Yu Wu, Sergey Edunov, Danqi Chen, and Wen tau Yih. 2020. Dense passage retrieval for open-domain question answering. In *Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing*.
- Yoonsang Lee, Pranav Atreya, Xi Ye, and Eunsol Choi. 2024. Crafting in-context examples according to lms' parametric knowledge. In *Findings of the Association for Computational Linguistics: NAACL 2024*, pages 2069–2085.
- Mukai Li, Shansan Gong, Jiangtao Feng, Yiheng Xu, Jinchao Zhang, Zhiyong Wu, and Lingpeng Kong. 2023. In-context learning with many demonstration examples. *ArXiv*, abs/2302.04931.
- Jiachang Liu, Dinghan Shen, Yizhe Zhang, Bill Dolan, Lawrence Carin, and Weizhu Chen. 2021. What makes good in-context examples for gpt-3? In Workshop on Knowledge Extraction and Integration for Deep Learning Architectures; Deep Learning Inside Out.
- Ji Ma, Ivan Korotkov, Yinfei Yang, Keith B. Hall, and Ryan T. McDonald. 2021. Zero-shot neural passage retrieval via domain-targeted synthetic question generation. In *Conference of the European Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics*.

- Nihal V. Nayak, Yiyang Nan, Avi Trost, and Stephen H. Bach. 2024. Learning to generate instruction tuning datasets for zero-shot task adaptation. *ArXiv*, abs/2402.18334.
- Jianmo Ni, Chen Qu, Jing Lu, Zhuyun Dai, Gustavo Hernandez Abrego, Ji Ma, Vincent Zhao, Yi Luan, Keith B. Hall, Ming-Wei Chang, and Yinfei Yang. 2021. Large dual encoders are generalizable retrievers. ArXiv, abs/2112.07899.
- Harsha Nori, Yin Tat Lee, Sheng Zhang, Dean Carignan, Richard Edgar, Nicolo Fusi, Nicholas King, Jonathan Larson, Yuanzhi Li, Weishung Liu, Renqian Luo, Scott Mayer McKinney, Robert Osazuwa Ness, Hoifung Poon, Tao Qin, Naoto Usuyama, Chris White, and Eric Horvitz. 2023. Can generalist foundation models outcompete special-purpose tuning? case study in medicine. *ArXiv*, abs/2311.16452.
- Hanseok Oh, Hyunji Lee, Seonghyeon Ye, Haebin Shin, Hansol Jang, Changwook Jun, and Minjoon Seo. 2024. Instructir: A benchmark for instruction following of information retrieval models. *ArXiv*, abs/2402.14334.
- Jon Saad-Falcon, O. Khattab, Keshav Santhanam, Radu Florian, Martin Franz, Salim Roukos, Avirup Sil, Md Arafat Sultan, and Christopher Potts. 2023. Udapdr: Unsupervised domain adaptation via llm prompting and distillation of rerankers. *ArXiv*, abs/2303.00807.
- Devendra Singh Sachan, Mike Lewis, Mandar Joshi, Armen Aghajanyan, Wen tau Yih, Joëlle Pineau, and Luke Zettlemoyer. 2022a. Improving passage retrieval with zero-shot question generation. In *Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing*.
- Devendra Singh Sachan, Mike Lewis, Dani Yogatama, Luke Zettlemoyer, Joëlle Pineau, and Manzil Zaheer. 2022b. Questions are all you need to train a dense passage retriever. *Transactions of the Association for Computational Linguistics*, 11:600–616.
- Keshav Santhanam, O. Khattab, Jon Saad-Falcon, Christopher Potts, and Matei A. Zaharia. 2021. Colbertv2: Effective and efficient retrieval via lightweight late interaction. In North American Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics.
- Jiu Sun, Chantal Shaib, and Byron Wallace. 2023. Evaluating the zero-shot robustness of instruction-tuned language models. *ArXiv*, abs/2306.11270.
- Nandan Thakur, Nils Reimers, Andreas Rücklé, Abhishek Srivastava, and Iryna Gurevych. 2021. BEIR: A heterogeneous benchmark for zero-shot evaluation of information retrieval models. In *Thirty-fifth Conference on Neural Information Processing Systems Datasets and Benchmarks Track (Round 2).*
- James Thorne, Andreas Vlachos, Christos Christodoulopoulos, and Arpit Mittal. 2018.

Fever: a large-scale dataset for fact extraction and verification. *ArXiv*, abs/1803.05355.

- Hugo Touvron, Louis Martin, Kevin R. Stone, Peter Albert, Amjad Almahairi, Yasmine Babaei, Nikolay Bashlykov, Soumya Batra, Prajjwal Bhargava, Shruti Bhosale, Daniel M. Bikel, Lukas Blecher, Cristian Cantón Ferrer, Moya Chen, Guillem Cucurull, David Esiobu, Jude Fernandes, Jeremy Fu, Wenyin Fu, Brian Fuller, Cynthia Gao, Vedanuj Goswami, Naman Goyal, Anthony S. Hartshorn, Saghar Hosseini, Rui Hou, Hakan Inan, Marcin Kardas, Viktor Kerkez, Madian Khabsa, Isabel M. Kloumann, A. V. Korenev, Punit Singh Koura, Marie-Anne Lachaux, Thibaut Lavril, Jenya Lee, Diana Liskovich, Yinghai Lu, Yuning Mao, Xavier Martinet, Todor Mihaylov, Pushkar Mishra, Igor Molybog, Yixin Nie, Andrew Poulton, Jeremy Reizenstein, Rashi Rungta, Kalyan Saladi, Alan Schelten, Ruan Silva, Eric Michael Smith, R. Subramanian, Xia Tan, Binh Tang, Ross Taylor, Adina Williams, Jian Xiang Kuan, Puxin Xu, Zhengxu Yan, Iliyan Zarov, Yuchen Zhang, Angela Fan, Melanie Kambadur, Sharan Narang, Aurelien Rodriguez, Robert Stojnic, Sergey Edunov, and Thomas Scialom. 2023. Llama 2: Open foundation and fine-tuned chat models. ArXiv, abs/2307.09288.
- Henning Wachsmuth, Shahbaz Syed, and Benno Stein. 2018. Retrieval of the best counterargument without prior topic knowledge. In *Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics*.
- Kexin Wang, Nandan Thakur, Nils Reimers, and Iryna Gurevych. 2021. Gpl: Generative pseudo labeling for unsupervised domain adaptation of dense retrieval. *ArXiv*, abs/2112.07577.
- Liang Wang, Nan Yang, and Furu Wei. 2023. Query2doc: Query expansion with large language models. *ArXiv*, abs/2303.07678.
- Jason Wei, Maarten Bosma, Vincent Zhao, Kelvin Guu, Adams Wei Yu, Brian Lester, Nan Du, Andrew M. Dai, and Quoc V. Le. 2021. Finetuned language models are zero-shot learners. *ArXiv*, abs/2109.01652.
- Jason Wei, Yi Tay, Rishi Bommasani, Colin Raffel, Barret Zoph, Sebastian Borgeaud, Dani Yogatama, Maarten Bosma, Denny Zhou, Donald Metzler, Ed Huai hsin Chi, Tatsunori Hashimoto, Oriol Vinyals, Percy Liang, Jeff Dean, and William Fedus. 2022. Emergent abilities of large language models. *ArXiv*, abs/2206.07682.
- Orion Weller, Benjamin Chang, Sean MacAvaney, Kyle Lo, Arman Cohan, Benjamin Van Durme, Dawn Lawrie, and Luca Soldaini. 2024. Followir: Evaluating and teaching information retrieval models to follow instructions. *ArXiv*, abs/2403.15246.

# **A** Experimental Details

We utilize the publicly available FLAN-T5-XL and Llama2 checkpoints<sup>5</sup>. When generating prototype queries, since we provide instructions, we leverage the chat variant of Llama2 as it is known to be finetuned on instructions. When performing in-context learning, we employ the base model. In instances where passages exceed 350 tokens, they are truncated, and query sampling is executed with a temperature of 1.0, employing parameters k = 25 and p = 0.95. We randomly sample 100K documents if the corpus size exceeds. For training the DistilBERT-TASB retriever, a batch size of 75 is adopted. If the corpus size is larger than 60K, a single epoch is conducted; otherwise, 3 epochs are performed. The training process incorporates a learning rate of 2e-5 and a warming step of 1000. Generating queries with EGG-FLAN are conducted on a single RTX 3090 GPU and generating queries with EGG-LLAMA are conducted on 4 RTX A6000 GPUs. Query generation with EGG-FLAN took 15 hours in total and EGG-LLAMA took 75 hours in total. Training with DPR took maximum 1-2 hours per each dataset. We did not modify any training pipeline of GPL.<sup>6</sup>

# **B** Query Examples

We provide examples of 3 generated queries for each dataset. Table 7 and 8 presents queries generated with EGG-FLANand EGG-LLAMA, respectively.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>https://huggingface.co/google/flan-t5-xl, https://huggingface.co/meta-llama/Llama-2-7b-hf, https://huggingface.co/meta-llama/Llama-2-7b-chat-hf

Dataset		Generated query
Fever	Zero-shot	Who is the author of the novel "Don Quixote"?
	Few-shot	Sancho Panza's novel Don Quixote written by Don Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra.
	EGG w/o ICL	"Sancho Panza's character provides a commentary on the societal issues of the time, particu- larly those related to class and social hierarchy.
	EGG	Sancho Panza is a humorous and insightful character in the novel Don Quixote who provides commentary on the events of the story and offers a unique perspective on the world.
	Gold	Sancho Panza is a fictional character in a novel written by a Spanish writer born in the 17th century.
Arguana	Zero-shot	What are the ethical and environmental impacts of meat production and consumption, and how do they compare to plant-based food systems?
	Few-shot	The meat industry is not green While many vegetarians and vegans may think that their diet is environmentally friendly, the reality is that the meat industry is not green. Meat production is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, and water pollution.
	EGG w/o ICL	"Do vegetarians really help the environment?", Simon Farrell offers an opposing view, argu- ing that vegetarianism may not be the most effective way to reduce the environmental impact of food production. According to Farrell, livestock farming creates unique environments, such as chalk down land and mountain
	EGG	Growing crops and vegetation can also be bad for the environment due to the use of fertilisers and pesticides and the destruction of forests and wildlife habitats, as well as the inefficiency of agricultural land use in some countries.
	Gold	Being vegetarian helps the environment Becoming a vegetarian is an environmentally friendly thing to do. Modern farming is one of the main sources of pollution in our rivers. Beef farming is one of the main causes of deforestation, and as long as people continue to buy fast food in their billions, there will be a financial incentive to continue cutting down trees to make room for cattle. ()
Scidocs	Zero-shot	What are the key differences between RMSProp and ESGD adaptive learning rate schemes for non-convex optimization?
	Few-shot	Escape from Saddle Points: A Survey of Non-Convex Optimization Techniques for Deep Learning
	EGG w/o ICL	Equilibration Preconditioner and Adaptive Learning Rate Schemes for Non-Convex Opti- mization
	EGG	Equilibration-Based Learning Rates for Deep Neural Networks with Non-Convex Losses
	Gold	Train longer, generalize better: closing the generalization gap in large batch training of neural networks
DBPedia	Zero-shot	What is the population density of Steele Township based on the 2010 census?
	Few-shot	township Rowan county North Carolina United States
	EGG w/o ICL	Steele Township
	EGG	Steele Township, Rowan County, North Carolina
	Gold	rowan university

Table 6: The table is formatted the same as Table 5. EGG w/o ICL indicates EGG-LLAMA without in-context learning stage, while EGG indicates the full EGG-LLAMA.

Dataset	Generated query
Fever	Monochamus adamitus is a species of beetle in the Cerambycidae family. Der Klassiker is the name given in German to the match between two German football clubs. Bootstrapping populations for parametric inference.
Arguana	Animals are sentient beings who can feel pleasure and pain. Animal suffering is just as serious as human suffering. Therefore it is immoral to kill animals for food when we do not need to do so. Sport and politics are separate and should be kept separate The Heathrow Airport has been at capacity since it was built and will continue to be.
Scidocs	WhatsApp Usage Patterns and Prediction ModelsRandom Walk with Restart on Large Graphs Using Block EliminationContext Suggestion for User-Oriented Recommender Systems
DBPedia	Jindo Island Game of Thrones (season 5) 2002 IIHF World Junior Ice Hockey Championships

Table 7: Examples of generated queries with EGG-FLAN. 3 examples are displayed per each dataset.

Dataset	Generated query
Fever	Monochamus adamitus is threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, which is caused by logging and agricultural activities.
	The matches between Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund are considered to be some of the biggest and most exciting in the German football leagues.
	A bootstrap is a technique for approximating an unknown population distribution from a known sample drawn from it.
Arguana	Killing animals for food is unjustified and unnecessary, and can be replaced with plant-based or lab- grown alternatives that do not require the killing of animals.
	The Euro 2012 football tournament should not be used for political posturing and grandstanding.
	Heathrow airport must expand in order to maintain its competitiveness and avoid falling behind other European airports.
Scidocs	A Study of WhatsApp Messaging and Behavior: Predictive Models and User Characteristics
	Fast and Accurate Random Walks with Restarts on Large Graphs Using Block Elimination
	Context Suggestion: User-Oriented Context Recommendation in Recommender Systems
DBPedia	Battle of Myeongnyang
	Game of Thrones Season 5
	2002 Men's World Ice Hockey Championships

Table 8: Examples of generated queries with EGG-LLAMA. 3 examples are displayed per each dataset.