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## Database Searching Tips

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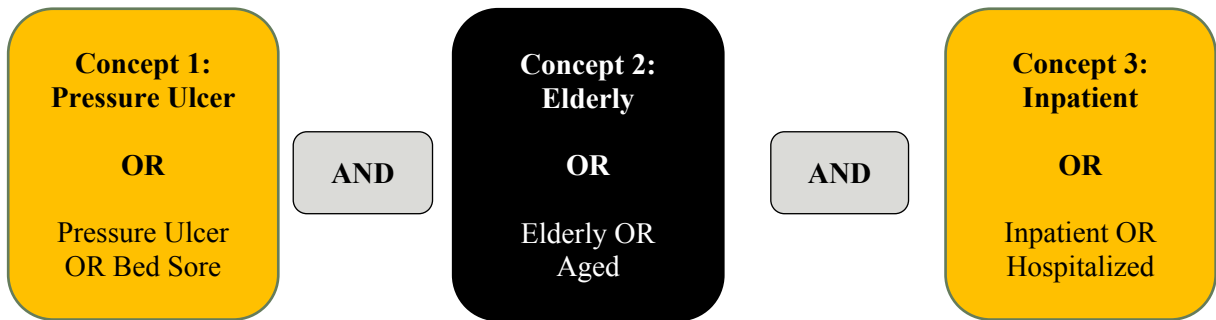


# Database Search Tips

## Basic Rules of Doing a Good Search

### 1) Break Search into Concepts

- Easier to Manipulate Your Search to Get Desired Results
- Start with Two Most Important Concepts from Your Question
- Combine with Boolean Operators - **AND, OR, NOT**



### 2) Come up with Alternative Terms or Concepts for Your Topic

- Databases = Different Audiences
- Remember Terms People Use Are Based on Background/Perspective
- Sources for:
  - Index/Entry Terms of Subject Headings
  - Terms from Related Articles
  - Google Scholar

	Concept/ Term	Synonyms/ Related Concepts (Other Ways to Describe)
Concept/ Term #1		OR
AND	Concept/ Term #2	OR
AND	Concept/ Term #3	OR

**Truncation - Train\* (Trained, Trainer, Training, etc.)**  
Be careful where you place \* as it could return unrelated articles.

**Grouping - Use Quotation Marks**  
Use to search as a phrase - "Pressure Ulcer" instead of "Pressure AND Ulcer"

**Compound Words** – May need to search word together and separate. (ex. "Health Care"/ "Healthcare")

**Title and Abstract – Two Best Fields to Search**

**PubMed** - [TIAB] or Advanced Search/Drop Downs

**CINAHL** - Use drop down beside Search box / Not Always Necessary





# Database Search Tips

### 3) Use Subject Heading When Possible

- PubMed – Medical Subject Headings (MeSH)
- CINAHL – CINAHL Headings
- Useful Tools:
  - *MeSH on Demand*: <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/MeSHonDemand.html>
  - *Yale MeSH Analyzer*: <http://mesh.med.yale.edu/>

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Controlled Vocabulary (Subject Heading)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May provide terms that can broaden or narrow search</li> <li>• Accounts for most common synonyms</li> <li>• Retrieve all items in database indexed under the topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recently coined terms may not have a subject term assigned</li> <li>• Can be difficult to find if no list of subject terms is included in the database</li> </ul>
Keyword	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retrieve synonyms, jargon, new or distinctive words</li> <li>• Identify relevant articles quickly to find appropriate controlled vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May retrieve irrelevant articles</li> <li>• Your search must account for synonyms and alternative terms</li> </ul>

### 4) Start Your Search Broad and Then Focus

- Use Limits/Filter of the Database (*Publication/Study Types, Language, Gender/Sex, Etc.*)
  - Start at the Top of the Evidence Pyramid and Work Down
- Add an Additional Concept or Term

Finding Too Many Articles? Ways to <i>Decrease/Focus</i> Your Results	Not Finding Enough? Ways to <i>Expand/ Increase</i> Your Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not explode</li> <li>• Restrict subject heading to major focus</li> <li>• Choose any relevant subheadings</li> <li>• Utilize limits to English language, human subjects, review articles, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explode whenever possible</li> <li>• Do not restrict subject headings to major focus</li> <li>• Do not choose subheadings</li> <li>• Consider searching back in time, look at citations</li> <li>• Consider doing a keyword search</li> </ul>





# Database Search Tips

## 5) Always Search at Least Two Databases – *Unique Articles in Each Database*

- Provide different ways to access same information base and may find evidence in one database using terminology that would not be found in another database.



Largest Database

Contains biomedical literature. Good when question is medical in nature or when you are not sure where to start



Available via EBSCOhost

Contains nursing and allied health literature. Good when question falls within the scope of nursing and allied health practice.



Contains psychological literature. Good when question addresses psychological issues.



Resources that contains several different databases, one of those being the database of systematic reviews. Good when you need a systematic review, economic evaluation, and randomized control trials.

## Notes

