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The Basic Rules of Doing a Good Search and Search Tips

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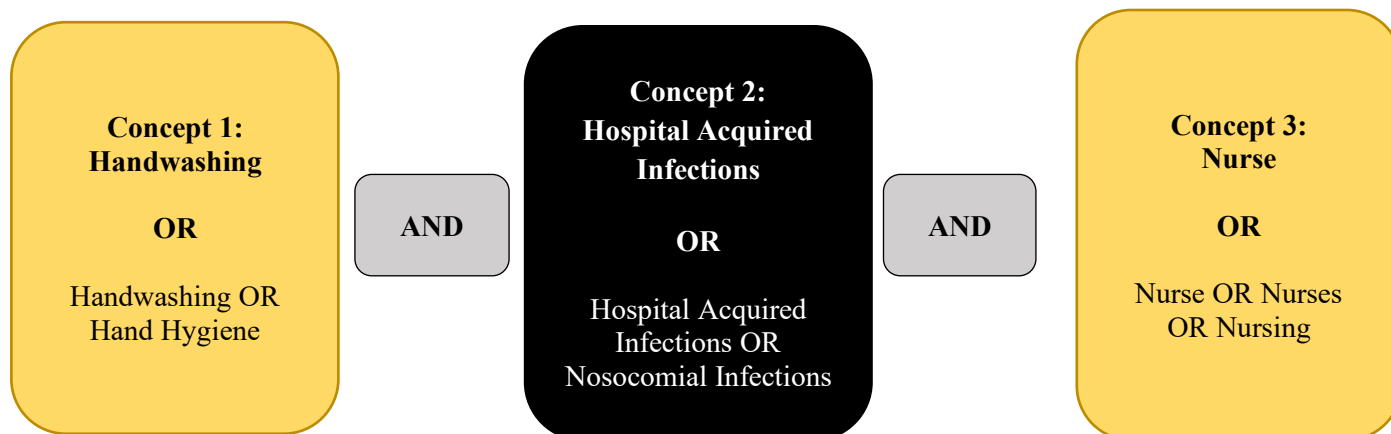
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The Basic Rules of Doing a Good Search and Search Tips

Keep in Mind: Search comprehensiveness is determined by information need.
(Patient Care v. School Assignment)

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 / education/ profession
- Sources for alternative terms:
 - 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



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3) Use Subject Heading When Possible (*Advanced Searching Skill*)

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

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"> • Utilize limits to English language, human subjects, review articles, time period searched (<i>last 5 years</i>), etc. • Add an additional term or concept • Do not explode • Restrict subject heading to major focus or major heading • Choose any relevant subheadings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add additional synonyms • Explode subject headings whenever possible • Do not restrict subject headings to major focus/heading • Do not choose subheadings • Consider searching back in time, look at citations of relevant article found.



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

Provide different ways to access existing literature on a topic and may find evidence in one database using terminology that would not be found in another database.

	<p>Contains biomedical literature. Good place to search when the question is medical in nature or when you are not sure where to start.</p>
	<p>Contains biomedical and pharmacological literature. Good place to search when it comes to medical, pharmacology and toxicology topics or questions.</p>
 <p>Available via EBSCOhost</p>	<p>Contains nursing and allied health literature. Good place to search when questions fall within the scope of nursing and allied health practice.</p>
	<p>Contains psychological literature. Good to search when the question addresses psychology or psychiatry topics.</p>
	<p>Resource that contains several different databases, one of those being the database of systematic reviews. Good place to search when you are searching for systematic reviews, economic evaluations and randomized controlled trials.</p>
	<p>Contains education research. Good places to search when your question addresses educational topics.</p>
	<p>Contains business, management and economic research. Good places to search when your search address management, economic or business topics.</p>



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Reasons for Differences in Searches

Word Choice

Background / Education / Perspective / Profession

How Terms are Combined

Boolean Operators - AND / OR / NOT

- OR: More; ANY of your search terms can be present in the resulting records.
- AND: Less; ALL search terms must be present in the resulting records.
- NOT: Narrow; Exclude words/concepts from your search.

Databases Searched

PubMed/MEDLINE or OVID MEDLINE
Biomedical/Medical Topics

Embase
Biomedical/Medical and Pharmacological Topics

CINAHL
Nursing and Allied Health Topics

Different Word or Term Options

Use of Quotation Marks = Exact Phrase Searching

Use of Limits / Filters

Put on After Combining Terms

Singular or Plural

Nurses v. Nurse

Field of Citation Searched

Title, Abstract, etc.

Truncation (*)

Nurs* = Nurse, Nurses, Nursing
Be Cautious When Using!

Subject Headings

MeSH, Emtree, CINAHL Headings, etc.

Compound Words

Together or Separate
“Handwashing” or “Hand washing”

