** Literature Search Plan**

***Your research question(s)***

Planning your search, and thinking about your keywords, will help focus your search.

What is your research question?

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* Underline the words which describe the main ideas/concepts (this helps to define initial search terms)
* Write those words into the boxes.

**Concept 1 Concept 2 Concept 3 Concept 4**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Key words** - terms from your own notes and brainstorming |  |  |  |  |

What synonyms, different spellings, singular/plural, acronyms, alternative words/phrases can you think of for each key concept in each box above? Write them in the relevant boxes below.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Synonyms** - related terms and variant spellings |  |  |  |  |
| **Subject headings eg MeSH** – if you already have a relevant paper look for it in PubMed and write down any relevant MeSH |  |  |  |  |

**Note:** You probably won’t think of all the possible ones immediately. As you search, you might find/notice additional words and phrases to add.

* Synonyms – e.g. heart, cardiac, cardiovascular, coronary
* Variant word endings – a truncation symbol may be used to retrieve singular, plural and variant endings of a word. The most common truncation symbol is a \* e.g. diabet\* to search for diabetes, diabetic, diabetics
* British v American spelling e.g. paediatric, pediatric
* Phrases e.g. “heart disease”
* One word or two eg pre-operative v preoperative; healthcare v health care
* Acronyms/Abbreviations e.g. MI

**How do the words relate to each other?**Join the words using **AND/OR**:

a) within the columns   
b) between the columns

(Tip: **AND** = BOTH/ALL these words have to be in each individual record.   
**OR** = ANY/EITHER ie in one record any of these words must be present. There has to be at least one of the words.)

***Finding related or similar material***

1. Have you already done some preliminary searching and found some relevant research?
2. Strategies you can use to “pearl grow” from this article to find related material

* reference lists
* cited references – use Google Scholar for this
* authors but remember just because someone writes a lot is it any good
* author keywords - add relevant ones to your search plan
* related or similar articles if using PubMed or Scopus
* if a search strategy is included in a relevant article you can use/modify it. Or in the article it might say we used these words and we searched these databases - you could use and modify for your search. Databases searches are often in an appendix or supplementary material links.

***Which databases to search?***

On the Library homepage change **Search Everything** to **Search** **Databases**>*Browse databases by Faculty or Subject* > scan the databases listed for that subject.

Get familiar with the differences between and the strengths and weakness of the databases. For each database you choose to use think about:

* What order are the results displayed in?
* Where is it searching for your words – title and abstract, subject headings, full text, reference list?
* Can you specify which fields it looks for your words in eg only in the article title?
* Is it putting an automatic AND between the words or do you need to put “ “ around phrases?
* Does it have subject headings?
* Does it have hyperlinked reference lists and citing articles?
* Does it have a variety of limits – eg language, date range, publication type eg rct, systematic review, age group filters, qualitative research?
* Can you create a free account and save your searches and set up search alerts?
* What is the difference between Medline (Ovid) and PubMed?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Database* | *Why do you think this database is relevant and useful for your topic?* |
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**Search tips and techniques**

**Subject Headings**

Some library databases such as Medline/PubMed use subject headings, which are standard terms for particular topics.

For example, the subject heading Adolescence may be applied to any items concerning teenagers, adolescents, youth and variations of those words. All articles that are mainly about this age group will have the subject heading "Adolescence" in their database record. **Too many results?**

* Search in **Title** only
* **Add** another concept to your search
* Use a more **specific keyword** e.g. myocardial infarction instead of cardiovascular disease
* Use **Limits** e.g. date

**Too few results?**

* **Remove** a concept
* Use **synonyms,** different spellings
* Try searching across a **range** of databases

**Saving your search**

In many databases, you can save searches to re-run in the future, and set up email alerts for new items including:

* New works published with specific keywords or topics relevant to your project
* New works by a specific author of interest to you
* New items that cite works by an author who is relevant to your research
* New items that cite a specific work related to your project**.**

**There is plenty of online help on how to search specific databases – just google.**Yale Medical Library hasvideos on how to search Medline (Ovid) and CINAHL. Access these via

<https://flexiblelearning.auckland.ac.nz/philson/8_8.html>

To store and manage the information that you find, you could use an Excel spreadsheet or a Word document. There is also a range of **reference management software** tools that can help with storing, managing and formatting bibliographic references eg RefWorks, Zotero, Mendeley, EndNote.  
   
For more information see the **Libraries and Learning Services** home page > **Study** > **Referencing** > **Reference management tools**

***Reference management***

<https://learningessentials.auckland.ac.nz/referencing/reference-management-tools/>

***Self-paced and online help***

See the online tutorial ***Information Skills Online: Searching writing and presenting for the medical & health sciences***  
https://flexiblelearning.auckland.ac.nz/philson/   
(Path: Library website > Study > Subject Guides > Medical & Health Sciences)

* + - * **Doing your search > How to** shows how to search Medline Ovid, CINAHL and PubMed.
* You will need to evaluate what you find. Look at the **Evaluating & Appraising** section.
* The **Literature review** section has resources, including researching and writing a literature review.

**See also Subject guides** (Library > Study > Subject Guides > Medical and Health Sciences

* **Hauora Māori (Māori Health)**<https://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/guides/medical-health/hauora-maori>
* **Pacific health**<https://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/guides/medical-health/pacific-health>

