Techniques for keyword searching in EBSCOhost and Ovid Online

Using Search Fields

Field searching allows you to decide how sensitive or specific you wish to make your search. This is because it allows you to select where, within a study, your search terms should appear before a study is found.

The main fields are title, abstract and all fields/all text.

- Selecting the all fields/all text option will perform a very sensitive (broad) search as you will retrieve results where your search terms appear anywhere within the text of a study.
- Selecting the title option will perform a very specific (narrow) search as you will only retrieve results where your search terms appear in the title of a study.
- The abstract option is normally recommended as it fall somewhere between these two and will only retrieve results where your search terms appear in the abstract (summary) of a study.

In EBSCOhost this is available in the Advanced Search option and in Ovid Online, the Multi Field search option.

These will provide you with two columns, one in which to enter your search terms and one to select the field where you wish those terms to appear e.g.
Finding Variants of a Search Term (Truncation)

Adding the * (Truncation symbol) at the end of a word stem will find variants of that word. It is particularly useful for retrieving both the singular and the plural forms of a word in the same search e.g.

If you enter the term _children_ into a database you will only retrieve results where that exact term appears.

If you enter _child* you will find _child, children or childhood_.

Truncation will thus expand the number of results you find.

# Truncation is a useful technique but be careful when using it. For example truncating the term _family_ (famit*) will find both the terms _family_ and _families_ BUT ALSO terms such as _familiar_ which are irrelevant and would lead to lots of irrelevant results.

In this case it would be best to enter the terms like this: _family OR families_
Finding Search Terms with Alternate Spellings

The Wildcard symbol (?) for databases in the Ovid Online platform and (# for databases in the EBSCOhost platform) allows you to find terms which have alternate spellings, such as those which have English and American spellings e.g.

In English the term *paediatric* is spelt with an 'a', whilst the American spelling *pediatric* does not use the "a".

Thus if you only use the English spelling in your search, you will not retrieve any results where the American spelling is used.

To find both, you would replace the 'a' with the wildcard symbol ? e.g. *p?ediatric*

As with the use of truncation, using the wildcard will also expand your search.
Proximity Searching

Proximity searching can be used for search terms which will find relevant results if they appear in a different order e.g.

- **health promotion** – promotion of health
- **behaviour therapy** – therapy for behaviour problems...
- **deteriorating patients** – patients who are deteriorating

To retrieve results where your terms appear in a different order you need to place a proximity operator in between your terms

The operators differ depending upon which database platform you are using:

- EBSCOhost = **N**
- Ovid Online = **adj**

A small number should be placed after the operator to clarify how far apart you wish your terms to appear within a study e.g.

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health N5 promotion
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this will retrieve any studies where the terms **health** and **promotion** appear within 5 words of each other, in any order.
Phrase Searching

In EBSCOhost entering a phrase such as National Health Service or Parkinsons Disease will search for each term separately as the AND operator is automatically placed between your terms e.g.

meaning that you will find results which contain the phrase but also results where the terms appear separately, leaving you with some irrelevant results.

If you want to restrict your search to only the phrase, place speech marks " " around your terms e.g.

Using techniques simultaneously

You can use more than one of the techniques for a search term, if they are appropriate e.g.

`health N5 promot*` will find- health promotion, promotion of health, promoting health, promotional health

`behaviourt N5 therap*` will find- behaviour therapy, behavior therapy, behaviour therapies, behavior therapies, behavioural therapy, behavioral therapy, behavioural therapies, behavioral therapies, therapy for behaviour, therapy for behavior, therapies for behaviour, therapies for behavior, therapy for behavioural, therapy for behavioral, therapies for behavioural, therapies for behavioral, therapy that / which can be used for behaviour… etc.`