Keyword (free text) searching in Ebscohost

Performing a Keyword search

A Keyword search can be performed using the Advanced Search option.

When performing a Keyword search you can enter all of your related search terms, for your chosen concept, together in one search and combine them using the OR operator.

Search techniques

There are a number of techniques you can use to enhance your Keyword Search:

Field Searching

You can make your Keyword search more precise by selecting the Abstract field. Without selecting this your search will retrieve studies where your selected search terms appear anywhere within the study. Selecting the Abstract field will only retrieve studies if your search terms appear in the abstract (summary) of the study.
Retrieving terms with variant endings

You can broaden your search by extending the scope of a search term e.g. entering the term *children* will only retrieve studies where that exact term appears. However, terms such as *child* and *childhood* are also relevant.

To retrieve these terms as well you need to add the **Truncation** symbol * at the end of the stem of the word e.g. *child* *

\[\text{child} \]  
\[\text{infants} \]  
\[\text{paediatric} \]  
\[\text{minors} \]

{NB} Truncation is a good technique to use but you need to be careful when using it. Truncating the term *family* to *famil* *, for example, will retrieve *family* or *families*. However, it will also retrieve terms such as *familiar* and *familiarity* which are irrelevant. In this instance it would be better to enter the terms this way— *family OR families* - without using truncation.

Retrieving terms with alternate spellings

Some search terms can have alternate spellings (English/American). If you enter a term using only one spelling you would miss any studies which use the alternate spelling. To solve this problem, you can use the **Wildcard** symbol #.

The American version of *paediatric*, for example, is spelt without the ‘a’- *pediatric*. 
To retrieve both spellings at the same time you can replace the ‘a’ with the wildcard symbol- *pediatric*

Phrase searching

If your search term consists of more than one word e.g. *young adults* you should surround it with speech (quotation) marks i.e. “*young adults*”.

If you don’t, then the database will search for each word separately i.e. *young* and *adults*.

Proximity searching

You may have some search terms which make sense if the words appear in a different order e.g.

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

To retrieve studies where your terms appear in a different order you can use the proximity operator N to place between your search terms.

A small number should be added after the N to indicate how far apart the words should appear in a study e.g.

*health N5 promotion* will retrieve any studies where the term *health* appears within 5 words of *promotion*, in any order.

You can combine the proximity operator with other techniques to broaden your search e.g.

*health N5 promot*
will retrieve studies with search terms such as: *health promotion*, *health promoting*, *promotion of health*, *promoting health*, *promotional health*

If you wanted to broaden your search by using related search terms you can use parenthesis (brackets) to control the way the database will search e.g.

*health N5 (promot* or educat*)*

will retrieve studies where the term *health* appears within 5 words of *promote/promoting/promotion/promotional* OR *educat/educating/education*

**Adding your Keyword Search to your Search History**

Once you have completed your Keyword Search, for the first concept of your topic, it will be added to your Search History together with your Subject Heading search(es) for that concept.