A guide to using Medline® and CINAHL®

This handout gives information on using Medline and CINAHL through the EBSCO® platform
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Introduction to Medline

Medline:
- Is recognised as the best source for searching Biomedical Literature.
- Contains well over 12 million records from more than 5,600 journals.
- Covers the years 1966 to date.

Introduction to CINAHL

CINAHL is the Cumulative Index of Nursing & Allied Health Literature.
- CINAHL indexes most English language journals in Nursing, Midwifery, Radiography and Rehabilitation.
- Coverage is back to 1937.

Accessing Medline or CINAHL

There are 2 ways to access the databases from the library’s webpage.

Option 1: Accessing through Summon:

1. Go to the Library homepage https://www.bradford.ac.uk/library/.
2. Enter the word Medline in the Summon search box if you want to go to Medline.
3. Enter the word CINAHL in the Summon search box if you want to go to CINAHL.
4. Click on the ‘Go’ button to do a search.

At the top of the search results page, click on the name of the database to link through.
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At this point if off-campus you will need to log in with your University of Bradford username and password.

Option 2: Accessing through the Health Subject Support pages:

1. Go to the Subject Support pages for Health  
   https://www.bradford.ac.uk/library/subject-support/health-studies/
2. Select the programme
3. Click on Databases
4. Click on the Name of the Database
5. Click on the Name of the Database again
6. If off campus you will need to log in with your University of Bradford username and password.

Changing to another EBSCO database

EBSCOHost provides a search interface to a selection of health-related databases, these are Medline, CINAHL, AMED and PsycINFO. Once you are within an EBSCO database you can change from one to another by clicking on the Choose Databases option at the top of the screen located just above the search boxes.

Untick the box next to the database you are using and place it into the box next to database you wish to use.

Medical Subject Headings (MeSH)

Each article on Medline and CINAHL are allocated a range of Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) to define or describe what the article is about. When you enter a keyword into the search box and click on search, the databases will automatically ‘map’ your keyword to one or several Medical Subject Headings related to your request. You will therefore be searching for articles that have been given particular subject headings rather than keywords in the abstract or title of the articles.

It is not recommended that you search across Medline and CINAHL in one search as you will not be given the list of Medical Subject Headings to choose from.

Also, unfortunately the MeSH are not always the same across Medline and CINAHL. Headings using Medline may not exist in CINAHL and vice versa.
Advanced Search

We recommend using Advanced Search which is also the default setting.

You will need to define your search clearly and pick out your key concepts.

Think about the keywords that describe your key concepts. Break down your question into keywords for example: How effective is education on reducing smoking during pregnancy? The main concepts for searching: pregnancy / smoking / education.

Initially ignore words such as effectiveness and reducing, these are not the key concepts. They are the outcomes you are hoping to find in the articles retrieved but not the key areas of study.

Search for your first keyword / key concept

Enter your first keyword (e.g. pregnancy) in the search box and click on Search.

1. The database will “map” the term you have used to a Medical Subject Heading.

2. Select the relevant Medical subject headings by ticking the box next to the term(s). You can pick as many as you think are relevant.

3. Click Search Database to run the search.
Search for your second keyword / key concept

Now enter your second keyword (smoking) into the search box and click on the ‘Search’ button.

1. As happened with your first term, the database will “map” what you have entered to the MeSH and suggest several headings.

2. Select the heading (Smoking) that is most relevant by ticking the box next to it.

3. Select any other relevant headings (for example the headings Tobacco Smoking, Cigarette Smoking and Smoking Cessation may also be useful). You may also need to think of other terms to use such as Nicotine and do extra searches to find other useful headings.

4. Click Search Database

*** If you are required to write up your search strategy it is recommended that you enter and search for each heading separately (see later for how to “combine” the searches into one set).

Search for your third keyword / key concept

If your research question has a third concept you will need to do another search or set of searches for the headings relating to your third concept.

What are Explode/Major Concept/Scope and Subheadings?

When you select a heading from the list of MeSH you may be given the option to Explode or select the heading as a Major Concept.
What is Explode?

Select the **Explode** option if you want your search to include the main heading plus all the subheadings. If you want to see the subheadings click on the **heading itself** and you will be taken to the MeSH “tree” structure where you can see the broader terms and the narrower terms to help you to make a decision on whether to explode or just to select specific headings.

What is a Major Concept?

If a heading has been allocated as a “Major Concept” it means that the main focus of the article relates to this particular subject heading. **Use with care** as the allocation of Major Concepts may not be completely reliable and articles where headings are not major concepts may also be relevant.

What is Scope?

This is a descriptive note about the meaning and application of the subject heading. This can be useful if you need clarification. Click on the scope icon to open the descriptor.

What are the Subheadings?

When you select a particular heading (by ticking the box next to it) you will see a range of **aspect or application related** subheadings on the righthand side. If sure you can select particular subheadings from the list, if not sure simply ignore these and go with the default which will select all.

Searching using keywords

The “Search as Keyword” option

Sometimes the keyword you have entered may not ‘map’ exactly to a relevant MeSH.

In cases like this you could select ‘**Search as Keyword**’ which is the last option on the list of headings. This will search for your keyword **anywhere** in an article record. Use with caution as it will search across all the fields including author, title, abstract, author’s keywords and publication details.

**A better option might be to search for certain keywords or key phrases in the abstract and/or title fields only.**
Searching for keywords or key phrases in the Abstract or Title

After searching for MeSH you will need to do additional searches for keywords or key phrases that might be located in article titles or abstracts.

To do this:

- Enter the keyword or key phrase into the search box.
- Use the dropdown arrow at the end of the search box to select **Abstract or Title** so that you are searching only within this particular field.

**Useful tools when keyword searching:**

These tools could be used when searching by keyword in abstract or title:

- **Truncation:** Use an asterisk (*) at the end of a word to find words with different endings. For example, pregnan* will find pregnant or pregnancy or pregnancies.
- **Phrase searching:** Use double quotation marks to search for short phrases. For example, “health education” will find just this exact phrase. The two words will be located next to each other.
- **Proximity searching:** Near operator (N) can be placed between words to find words near to one another regardless of the order in which they appear. For example: smok* N4 pregnan* will find any articles with the two words a maximum of four words apart.
- **Proximity searching:** Within operator (W) will find words within each other in the order that they have been entered. For example: smok* W8 pregnan* will find any articles with the first word listed then the second word listed within eight words of one another.

**Combining Searches**

You will now have two, three or many more separate searches.

There are two ways to “Combine” the searches so that you have a final set of results.

To combine searches you can use **‘Search with AND’** or **‘Search with OR’**.

They have very different functions.
‘Search with AND’ is used to bring two or more searches together into one set of articles which have ALL the Subject Headings or keywords present.

‘Search with OR’ is used to bring two or more searches together into one set of articles containing ANY (either one OR the other) of the subject headings or keywords.

A list of previous searches can be seen under Search History/Alerts.

To combine previous searches, click the box next to each search you wish to use, then click on either “Search with AND” or “Search with OR” as required.

Any number of searches can be combined. Simply tick the box next to the search to select it, then decide if they need to be combined with “AND” or “OR”.

In this case given above there are 12 searches:
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- S1 Pregnancy (MeSH selected)
- S2 Smoking (MeSH selected)
- S3 Tobacco Smoking (MeSH selected)
- S4 Cigarette Smoking (MeSH selected)
- S5 Nicotine (MeSH selected)
- S6 Smok* (keyword search in the Abstract OR Title to pick up any extra articles which haven't been given MeSH)
- S7 COMBINED SEARCH. All the searches relating to smoking have been combined using “Search with OR” to get one set of results for this aspect.
- S8 Health Education (MeSH selected)
- S9 Health Promotion (MeSH selected)
- S10 education (keyword search in the Abstract OR Title also)
- S11 advice (keyword search in the Abstract OR title also)
- S12 COMBINED SEARCH. All the searches relating to promotion, education and advice have been combined using “Search with OR” to get one set of results for this aspect.

The final step would be to Combine S1, S7 and S12 using “Search with AND” to get a set of result which contain ALL aspects of the question.

Click on View Results or Scroll down the page to look at the final set of results.

Refining a search

1. Click on SHOW MORE (On the left of the screen under the date slider).
2. If you want to refine to recent references published after a certain date choose the date you want to go back to (e.g. 2009).
3. Select the most appropriate limits.
4. Click on Search to impose your limits.

Your results can be refined by many parameters including date, English language, to different kinds of research and to patient characteristics such as age and gender.

*** Do not limit to Full-Text as you will be limiting to articles which are only available as full-text within the database. Other articles may be available probably as part of the library collections just in a different database or journal package.

Do not use the Geography Filter as it selects the location where the journal is published rather than the location where the research was undertaken.
**Reviewing your search**

Once you have completed the search you may find that you have too many or too few results. Here are a few things to consider:

### Too few results?

- Have you missed using some Headings?
- Do you need to include some keyword searches and search within the abstract or title?
- If keyword searching, did you **truncate** the keywords?
- If keyword searching did you use phrase searching? Would it be better to just search for one word instead of a phrase?
- Have you missed alternative spellings for example behaviour OR behavior. Should you include another search for the alternative spelling?
- Have you misspelt something?
- Have you applied too many filters or been too restrictive with your filters?
- Have you used "**Search with AND**" when you should have used "**Search with OR**"? Remember OR means either, AND means both.
- Do you think the research exists? Do you need to revisit your research question? could you broaden the population group, the treatment, the context?

### Too many results?

- Have you included too many keyword searches which may have picked up lots of irrelevant articles?
- Do you need to just focus on the articles which have been given the most relevant Subject Headings?
- Do you need to look again at the filters offered? Could you filter to Age, Gender or Publication Type?
- Have you used "**Search with OR**" when you should have used "**Search with AND**"?
- Do you need to revisit your research question? Could you bring another aspect into your question or focus on a particular age group, gender or population group?

### Viewing articles

**Click on the title of an article** to get the Article Information page, where you will find:

1. Title of the article (at the top).
2. Author(s) and their affiliations (beneath the title of the article).
3. Source information. Journal title, volume number, issue number and page numbers for the article.
4. MeSH terms allocated. Take a look at the headings used in relevant articles. This may provide ideas for further searches.
5. **Abstract**, which is a summary of the article content. Read this before you try to find the Full-Text of the article.
6. Either a PDF or the 360 Link to find Full-Text (located on the left).
7. Print / Save / E-mail / Export links (located on the right).
8. Cite. How to cite the article using multiple standard citation styles (located on the right).
9. A Permalink. Use this link if you need to save a link to the article or give the link to somebody else (located on the right).

### How to get to the Full-Text

1. Sometimes a PDF (Portable Document Format) is available within the database. All you would need to do is click on PDF to open the full article which you can then save. If you email it to yourself from the database, the email in cases like this would include the PDF.

2. Where PDF is not offered click on the 360 Link. This will check whether the article is available to view in full text through other databases or packages. You may need to link through, just follow the link.

3. If the 360 Link takes you to the article on the journal website it may ask you to log in especially if off campus. Log in with your university username (normally without
the need to add @bradford.ac.uk) followed by your password. Once logged in locate the PDF version if you need to save or print the full document.

4. If the 360 Link takes you to a page where it says “**Sorry this item is not available online. Please use the options below to get it:**” You could try the following options:
   a. Click to search the library catalogue by title or by ISBN or ISSN as offered.

   ![Search for library catalogue](image)

   This will check whether the University library holds the **journal title** at all. If we do hold it, we may have print copies in the library for the year needed. Check the details of the holdings on the catalogue record.

   b. Double check by entering the article title into Summon.

   c. Search Google Scholar in case an “Open Access” copy is available on the internet.

   If none of these options work, you can order the article via Inter-Library Loans. More information on this service is available at [https://www.bradford.ac.uk/library/find-out-about/inter-library-loans/](https://www.bradford.ac.uk/library/find-out-about/inter-library-loans/)

**Selecting articles to add to the Folder**

1. Select relevant references as you go along by clicking on the blue folder on the right of each result to add to the FOLDER.

2. You can add 50 items at a time to the FOLDER by changing the Page Options to 50. This can be found at the top of the list of results. Click on Share and select Results (1-50) to add the first 50 to the Folder. Click to the next page then add Results (50-100) etc.

   ![Selecting articles to add](image)

   **NOTE:** the folder will clear when you leave the database unless you have signed in and created an account with EBSCOHost (see below).

   1. When you have finished your selection, look for a **Folder** link at the top of the main screen and click on it. The references you have selected will have been stored here.

   2. From your folder you can print, save, email or export to **EndNote** selected articles at once. You can select ALL or specific items.
Setting up and using a personal account

1. If you wish to keep articles or searches permanently in your Folder you must create an account with EBSCOHost and sign in. Look for the Sign-in link at the top right of the Main Search Page.

2. At the bottom of the screen it says “Don’t have an account? Create one now” Click on the link and complete the form (you will be asked to create a username and password). You will need to include letters/numbers and symbols in your password. You will be creating these directly with EBSCO. REMEMBER what you have used!

3. As well as permanently saving articles you can also save searches so you can re-run them later. Look for the ‘Save Searches/Alerts’ option located just below the search boxes.

4. Click on Save Searches / Alerts. Give your search a name (For example CINAHL Smoking and Pregnancy 1 or Medline Smoking and Pregnancy 1). Click on the ‘Save' button. You can also set up an alert so that you are notified if new articles are added to the database which match your search.

5. Next time you want to retrieve the references or re-run the searches saved in your Folder go to the database (Medline or CINAHL) and sign into your EBSCOHost account then click on ‘Folder’ located next to the sign-in option at the top.

6. Once you have signed in look at the menu on the left. To re-run a search, click on Saved Searches in the menu, locate the search and click on Retrieve Saved Search. When the search appears on the screen tick the Select box to select all the lines, then click on Refresh Search Results to re-run the full search.

Help

Need help? Book an appointment with a member of Library staff via the Library homepage: https://bradford.libcal.com/appointments.

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