Information skills 2: Getting more out of Discovery

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Contents

Defining your search as a question

E.g.

What are the best preventative interventions for older residents of care homes who are at risk of falling?

This may need adjusting when you see the results. If the question is very broad, you will get too many hits, if it is too narrow you will get only a few hits. A 'hit' is a result that fulfils the search criteria.

Creating a strategy

It is good practice to create a search strategy before searching. A search strategy is a structured organisation of terms used to search a database. The search strategy shows how these terms combine in order to retrieve the best results.

The strategy needs some thought:

Step 1. Break the question down into the main three or four key concepts. Concepts are the key areas or elements in your question. A concept might be a condition, an intervention, a patient group, a professional group etc.

The concepts here could be: Falls, prevention, older people, residential care

Q: Is residential care an important concept? Could there be preventative interventions used in other situations that could be adapted for residential care?

Step 2. Think of synonyms for each term, what you call it; what authors might call it; different spellings etc., and list in columns on a grid.

Concepts		Falls	Prevention	Older People	Residential Care
OR	↑	Fall*	Prevent*	"Older people"	"residential care"
		Trip	Reduc*	"Older person"	"nursing home*"
		Stumble		"Older adult*"	"care home*"
		Slip		"Older wom?n"	"assisted living"
		Stagger		"Older m?n"	"care facilities"
		Balance		Elderly	"long-term care"
	↓	Drop			
		←————————————— AND —————————————→			

Note:

Because Discovery is a merger of several databases, using subject headings is not as effective as it is when searching each database separately. You can find a link to the individual databases on the 'New search' page. The Cinahl and MeSH headings are included in Discovery to suggested possible search terms.

Truncation and Wildcards

(*) An asterisk symbol represents any number of characters following the root of the word E.g. Physio* will pick up physio, physiotherapy, physiotherapist BUT you will also get physiology, physiological etc.

?   A question mark in the middle of a word represents a single character, here an 'a' or an 'e'
E.g. Wom?n will retrieve woman and women

Phrase searching

To search for a phrase use double inverted commas "…" E.g. "shoulder impingement" BUT this will not retrieve "impingement in the shoulder"

Proximity searching

Near Operator **-** N5 finds the words if they are within *five words* of one another regardless of the order in which they appear. Here it is set to 5 words but you can decide on the number.

E.g. **Shoulder N5 impingement** will retrieve 'shoulder impingement' and 'impingement in the shoulder'.

Within Operator **- W8** finds the words if they are within *eight words* of one another and *in the order in which you entered them*. Again, you can specify the number.

E.g. **health W8 policy** will find '*health in law and policy'* but would **not** find 'policy supporting worksite health promotion programs.'

Multiple terms in brackets or phrases can be used on each side the operator e.g. (physiotherapy OR rehabilitation OR "physical therapy") N6 (dementia OR Alzheimer*)

Step 3. OR the terms in each column (See: Boolean operators)

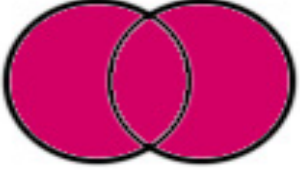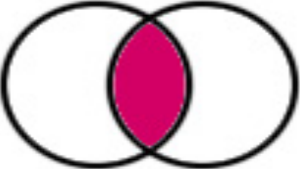Step 4. AND each column totals (See: Boolean operators)

Boolean operators

Note: Boolean operators do not have to be in upper case; here it is used for clarity

OR operator. Falls or Trip or Slip or Stumble… Using the OR operator increases the number of hits

AND operator. Using the AND operator reduces the number of hits

NOT operator. Use with caution, using the NOT operator may remove relevant hits

Note: AND and OR Boolean operators are contrary to natural language

fall OR trip	items containing either fall or trip	
fall AND "older person"	items containing both fall and "older person"	
fall NOT home	items containing fall but not at home – *caution,* it may exclude relevant items e.g. "care home"	

Literature searching suggested workflow

Start

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Describe the search topic as a question

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Define the scope of the search, what it include and what to exclude

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Identify the concepts within the question and list terms for each concept

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Access Discovery via the CSP website having logged in

↓

Search for each concept using OR between the terms

Concept 1 Term 1	OR	Concept 1 Term 2	OR	Concept 1 Term3...	=	Total for Concept 1
Concept 2 Term 1	OR	Concept 2 Term 2	OR	Concept 2 Term3...	=	Total for Concept 2
Concept 3 Term 1	OR	Concept 3 Term 2	OR	Concept 3 Term3...	=	Total for Concept 3

Use AND to combine the totals

↓

Review the hits and decide if relevant → Yes

↓ No

Manageable number of hits? — Yes →

↓ No

Scope too wide, consider narrowing search

Consider limiting by:
-Date range
-English language
-Full text

Revisit the selected terms: too many, ambiguous terms or too general

No

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