Introduction to PsycINFO

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Before using PsycINFO

Before you begin to search for articles, make sure you have a clear idea of your topic. Separate your topic into key concepts, and think of key terms and synonyms that you could use in your research. For example, the following question has three key concepts:

What is the relationship between sleep and university students’ grades?

Multiple terms could describe each of these concepts: grades could be referred to as grade point average, academic success, academic achievement, and so on. Consider these possibilities before searching for articles!

Accessing PsycINFO

Visit library.ualberta.ca/augustana, click on Subject Guides, and select the Psychology Subject Guide. A link to PsycINFO is on the main page of the guide.

Beginning Your Search

1. Use the Advanced Search option to find articles on your topic. Begin by entering one of your key terms into the search box. Ensure that “Map Term to Subject Heading” is selected; this function will search PsycINFO’s thesaurus for your term.

2. Once you press “Search,” PsycINFO will provide a list of Subject Headings that may be relevant to your topic. If you do not see a relevant Heading, try searching again with a different term. PsycINFO assigns these Subject Headings to articles to make it easier to find relevant information. Only select the “search as Keyword” option if you are absolutely sure that your concept is not included in the thesaurus. (Not sure? Ask a librarian or your professor for help.)
3. Click on a relevant Subject Heading to see its broader, narrower, and related terms:

![Subject Heading Table]

Note: Selecting the Explode function in the above example will retrieve all articles that have the Subject Heading of Sleep, OR any of its narrower terms (Napping, NREM Sleep, REM Sleep).

Selecting Focus will ensure that the Subject Heading is a major focus of all articles retrieved.

4. Once you have selected any relevant terms and Exploded and/or Focused as necessary, press “Continue.”

5. Now you have searched for one of your concepts. Repeat the process (steps 1-4) for all additional concepts.

Combining Search Terms

After you have searched for each of your concepts individually, you should have several searches in your Search History. A single concept may have multiple searches, as in the following example:

![Search History](search_history.png)

6. Now you need to combine these terms to perform a more specific search. Type the numbers representing each search into the Advanced Search box, using Boolean operators (AND & OR) to connect them. Use parentheses to combine similar terms. (If you are not sure how to use Boolean operators, ask a librarian!)
7. Press “Search.” You should now have an additional search in your Search History, with a relatively small number of results.

8. Combine different sets of terms to see what retrieves the most relevant results. If you do not find any relevant articles the first time you try, you will need to change the way that you are searching. Consider using broader or narrower Subject Headings or adding synonyms to your search.

Adding Limits to Your Search

Adding limits makes your search even more specific by focusing on certain types of publications, population groups, methodologies, etc.

9. Click on the “Additional Limits” button underneath the Advanced Search box. By default, any limits will be applied to your most recent search.

10. Do NOT use limits such as Full Text, Ovid Full Text Available, or PsycARTICLES! This will exclude relevant results. Consider adding limits to Methodology, Publication Types, and Age Groups (if relevant) by clicking on your desired selection. See page 4 of this guide for an image of the Limits page.

11. Once you have finished selecting limits, Press the “Limit a Search” button at the bottom of the page. This will add a new line to your search history, likely with fewer results than before.

Viewing and Accessing Your Results

12. Scroll down the Advanced Search page to see the results of your most recent search. Clicking on the title of any article will show more details about it, including all of the Subject Headings assigned to that article.

13. To access an article, click on the button. This will show you where the item is available. If it is electronic, you will be linked to the article itself. If it is in print, you will be linked to the library catalogue. If you need help locating or placing a hold on an item in the library catalogue, please ask!
PsycINFO Limits

**Limits**

- Full-Text
- Peer Reviewed Journal
- Animal
- Abstracts
- Tests & Measures
- Test DOI
- Ovid Full-Text Available
- All Journals
- Human
- Disordered Populations
- Treatment & Prevention
- Open Access
- PsychARTICLES Journals
- Latest Update
- English Language
- Non Disordered Populations
- Online First Publication
- Impact Statement

Publication Year - ▼ [ ] ▼

**PsycINFO Classification Code**

1. General Psychology
2. History & Systems
3. Psychometrics & Statistics & Methodology
4. Tests & Testing
5. Sensory & Motor Testing

**Clinical Queries**

- Reviews (maximizes sensitivity)
- Reviews (maximizes specificity)
- Reviews (best balance of sensitivity and specificity)
- Therapy (maximizes sensitivity)
- Therapy (maximizes specificity)

**Intended Audience**

- Fringe to Psychology
- Questionable
- General Public
- Juvenile
- Psychology: Professional & Research

**Age Groups**

- 100 Childhood < birth to age 12 yrs>
- 120 Neonatal < birth to age 1 mo>
- 140 Infancy < 2 to 23 mo>
- 160 Preschool Age < age 2 to 5 yrs>
- 180 School Age < age 6 to 12 yrs>

**Publication Types**

1. Journal
2. Peer-Reviewed Journal
3. Non-Peer-Reviewed Journal
4. Peer-Reviewed Status Unknown
5. Book

Questions? Ask us! augustana.reference@ualberta.ca

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Sample Search History in PsycINFO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Searches</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>*sleep/</td>
<td>16887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>*academic achievement/</td>
<td>45833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>*college academic achievement/</td>
<td>5364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>exp college students/</td>
<td>80786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 and (2 or 3) and 4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>limit 5 to (&quot;0400 empirical study&quot; and &quot;0100 journal&quot;)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exploded and/or focused subject searches

Searches combined with AND & OR

Limits added at end

Do NOT use these! They do not allow for complex searching. Use the Advanced Search box to combine your terms.

Note: your Search History may have many more searches than this one! Be persistent to ensure that you find the most relevant articles.