Being clear about what you’re searching for

What is your search topic?
Can you put it into a simple sentence? If you are searching a database you must make sure you are certain what you’re looking for and can put it into a simple descriptive sentence. If you can’t, then spend a bit more time thinking about it.

* e.g. caring for patients with a psychotic illness *

Accessing the CINAHL database

Go to the Database and log-in. Log-in using your usual student log-in details.

1. Go to the Library website. 2. Find  
2. Click, and then find ‘C’. 4. Click ‘C’. Go down the list of till you find CINAHL
5. Click on CINAHL Complete

Developing a search strategy

We need to be able to convert our topic sentence to a form that can be entered into the database. What are the subjects in our topic? What are the subjects which relate to each other in our topic?

Our example search has three subjects:  a. caring  b. patients  c. psychotic illness

We can enter these into the database’s search boxes

Try adding other words or phrases of similar meaning into each box like this: e.g. OR psychosis

Change ‘Select a Field’ to ‘Title’ to focus your result

We can now click Search.

Entering schizophrenia* (the first few letters with a star on the end) rather than both schizophrenia and schizophrenic will include articles which use either word or other forms of the word (e.g. schizophrenics) and so increase your result. The star is called a ‘truncation’ symbol.

If you are searching for a phrase the use speech marks “ “ to make sure the database looks for the words together.
Use ‘Limit To’ to exclude out of date material by sliding the slide across from the left to the date you wish to limit to. e.g. 2008. ‘Show More’ underneath the date slide will let you limit to English and Research studies.

References

Clicking ‘Search’ will give a list of references to journal articles about your topic like the one above. Each consists of a title (blue) and other details including the authors and which journal it was published in. The one above is in the journal 'Journal of Clinical Nursing' issue 19 and 20 (a double issue) of volume 20.

Read through the references and save the ones you want by clicking on the blue folder.

The Folder containing your saved references is at the top of the screen. You can e-mail them to yourself from there. Don’t forget to use the ‘E-Journal’ tab to access the full article if there’s no pdf here. Enter the name of the journal and following the link to the journal’s webpage. Enter the article title into the search box you find there.

Now do the search above and answer some questions

Complete these searches and answer the following questions:


With schizophrenia replaced with schizophren* (see above) yielded how many references? _____

2. What other search words could be altered or even replaced by use of the star? _________

3. Can you think of any other words that might be added to any of the boxes? __________________