CINAHL (CUMULATIVE INDEX TO NURSING AND ALLIED HEALTH LITERATURE)

SEARCH TIPS

CINAHL @ THE BIRD LIBRARY
The EBSCO interface provides access to a number of different CINAHL files; the Bird Library subscribes to the most comprehensive file known as CINAHL Complete. In addition to journal literature, books, book chapters, dissertations/theses, videos, and other materials are indexed in CINAHL. OUHSC faculty, students, and staff can access the database both on and off campus by searching or browsing the Bird Library’s Databases A-Z List (http://libguides.ouhsc.edu/az.php).

SEARCHING WITH CINAHL SUBJECT HEADINGS
- CINAHL Subject Headings are the controlled vocabulary used to index articles for CINAHL
- The subject headings are arranged in both an alphabetic and hierarchical structure and follow the structure of MeSH (the controlled vocabulary used in the MEDLINE database)
- CINAHL Complete defaults to automatically map users to relevant CINAHL Subject Headings, if available, for whatever word or phrase is entered into the search box

Advantages of Searching with CINAHL Subject Headings
- Synonyms, alternative spellings, and similar variations which describe the same concept are typically brought together under a single subject heading term
- When you search with CINAHL Subject Headings you have access to tools that are not available when you search using keywords including:
  - Tree – click on the hyperlinked CINAHL Subject Heading to view related terms that are more general (broader) and more specific (narrower) than your selected term
  - Scope Note – includes the definition of the subject heading
  - Explode – makes it easy to expand your retrieval for any given concept by including results indexed with your selected CINAHL Subject Heading and all of its more specific terms
  - Major Concept – makes it easy to narrow your retrieval to only those documents in which your selected subject heading is considered to be a major point in the article
  - Subheadings – can be used to narrow the focus of your search by emphasizing a particular aspect; options will vary depending upon your selected CINAHL Subject Heading and multiple subheadings can be applied

SEARCHING WITH KEYWORDS
- When conducting keyword searches you are responsible for figuring out synonyms, alternate spellings, and other variations that may need to be incorporated into the search to adequately cover your concept
- Keyword searching may be your best option when:
  - you can’t find a subject heading term for your concept
  - the subject heading is relatively new and you need to obtain earlier literature
  - you need to search for a precise word or phrase, such as a brand name, in fields like the title and abstract

BOOLEAN OPERATORS
Three Boolean operators are commonly used to combine concepts when searching.

AND
- Decreases retrieval
- Retrieves records that contain all concepts connected by the operator
- Concepts can be entered in any order
OR

- Often used to combine related concepts or synonyms
- Increases retrieval
- Retrieves records that contain any of the concepts connected by the operator
- Concepts can be entered in any order

NOT

- Use with caution so that you do not eliminate relevant results
- Retrieves records that exclude the concept following the operator
- Decreases retrieval
- Order does matter (e.g. the search statement **massage NOT deep tissue massage** will retrieve different results from the search statement **deep tissue massage NOT massage**)

OTHER SEARCH TOOLS

- **Limits** – can be applied to make your retrieval even more relevant to your needs
  - Commonly used limits in CINAHL are displayed on the left side of the results display and include publication year, source type, age, and gender
  - To see **all** available limits in CINAHL click on the **first** “Show More” link in the left hand column
  - Two very important limits available in CINAHL are the options to limit your retrieval to:
    - Research Article(s)
    - Peer Reviewed sources
- **Truncation** – is used at the end of a word stem to search for variations
  - In CINAHL Complete the asterisk (*) is used
  - Example: **nurs*** retrieves references containing nurse, nurses, nursing, nursery, nurseries, etc.
  - Truncation is most useful with keyword searches

TIPS FOR BROADENING OR NARROWING YOUR SEARCH

- **For a comprehensive search:**
  - Explosde CINAHL Subject Headings whenever possible
  - Do not restrict CINAHL Subject Headings to Major Topic
  - Do not attach subheadings to CINAHL Subject Headings
  - Apply limits sparingly
  - Consider searching other databases/resources
- **To search for a few, highly relevant articles:**
  - Do not explode CINAHL Subject Headings
  - Restrict one or more of the CINAHL Subject Headings used in the search to Major Topic
  - Attach any relevant subheadings to your CINAHL Subject Heading(s)
  - Utilize limits as needed

ADDITIONAL CINAHL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- **Folder** – A temporary holding place for references selected by the user (look for the folder icon in the interface)
- **My EBSCOhost** – Personalize the EBSCO interface and access additional functionality by creating a personal account (click the Sign In link at the top of the page)
- **Evidence Based Care Sheets** – Evidence based summaries on selected topics; browse the collection by clicking on the link in the top menu bar of CINAHL Complete or limit your search results to this source type
- **Quick Lessons** – Clinically organized nursing overviews; browse the Quick Lessons from the drop down menu under “More” in the top menu bar of CINAHL Complete or limit your search results to this source type

HELP

- Contact a Reference Librarian by emailing bird-reference@ouhsc.edu or calling (405) 271-2285