

Basic Guide to EBSCO Databases

Databases provided by EBSCO include CINAHL, ERIC, PsycINFO, and SportDiscus. If you need to do research in the fields of nursing, education, psychology, counseling, or sports medicine, these databases are your best sources for articles.

Keyword Searching

Type one keyword or phrase into each of the search boxes. If you want to do a particular kind of search, such as for an author or a specific article title, use the drop down menu to the right of the search box. Otherwise, the default setting looks for your search words in the abstract and title (usually). Click on "Search."

Subject and Subheading Searching

In the green tool bar, click on a button called "Thesaurus", "Subjects" or "CINAHL Headings". In the "Browse for" box, type in your keyword ("death penalty") and click on the radio button for "relevancy ranked." Checkmark the correct subject heading ("Capital Punishment") and, if appropriate, checkmark the "Explode" and "Major Concept" boxes to the right of the subject heading. Click on "Search" next to the Find it box at the top of the screen.

In CINAHL, you can get to subheadings through Subject Searching. Follow the steps above, but when you find the correct subject heading, click on the link. A screen detailing your subheading choices will appear, and you can checkmark the ones of interest to you. Checkmark the "Explode" and "Major Concept" boxes if appropriate, and then click on "Search" next to the Find it box at the top of the screen.

Explode and Major Concept

Some of the databases, like ERIC, PsycINFO, and CINAHL, have sophisticated subject heading structures allowing you to do some pretty fancy searching. Records in these databases are not only given subject headings, but subject headings of different weight. The indexer decides which of the subject headings are the main point of the article- what is it really about? These become the major subject headings and are given an asterisk. Checkmarking a "Major Concept" box limits your search to those items which have that subject heading with an asterisk. "Major Concept" is the equivalent of Ovid's "Focus" box.

"Explode" is possible because the subject headings are arranged in a tree structure, from broad to narrow. If you checkmark "explode", you are searching not only your particular subject heading, but any more specific subject headings which are indented underneath. Exploding "teaching methods" would give you not only articles that talk about teaching methods in general, but all the articles which talk about specific types of teaching methods.

Remember that "Explode" and "Major Concept" do different things and do not cancel each other out. Also, they are only available when doing Subject Searching, not keyword searching.

Limiting Searches

When you first enter the database, there is a list of possible limits underneath the search boxes. Depending on the database you are in, you may limit to age groups, publication type, full text

articles, etc. After you've done one search, you will need to click on the "Refine Search" tab underneath the search boxes to see the limits.

Combining Searches

If you want to put two of your searches together, click on the "Search History/Alerts" tab. You can checkmark the search steps you want to combine. Be careful! The database will combine the search steps with whatever words may be typed into the search box above. You can click on the "Clear" button next to the search boxes to avoid that combination.

Full Text

Some databases have full text articles within them. You will see a link like "HTML full text" or "PDF full text" if the article is available online through this database. If there is no such link, click on the "Find Full Text" link; this will search the McConnell Library catalog to see if we have the journal online or in print, and provide you with a link to the article if possible.

Printing/Emailing/Saving Search Results

Mark an item for printing/emailing by clicking the "Add" icon to the right of the citation. When you're finished going through your results, click on the "View Folder" icon in the upper right of the screen. Choose whether you want to print, email, or save your results, then respond to the options that result.

Further Help

If you have a question about EBSCO or any other library database, please contact the reference desk by either calling 540-831-5696 or by e-mailing refdesk@radford.edu.