

## Literature Searching – a guide to searching

### Your topic

- What is your area of research - create a question or sentence that describes your topic.

### Keywords

- What are the main words that best describe your topic – these are the keywords you will use to search the literature.
- You can use a mind map to help you.

### Develop your keywords

- There are different ways your area of research may be discussed in the literature. Use a dictionary / thesaurus to identify alternative additional keywords.
- Think about broader, narrower and related words.
- Look at the headings and abstracts of the materials you find for additional relevant keywords.

### Combine your keywords - using AND / OR

- The most effective way to search a database is to use a combination of your keywords. Don't search using sentences.
- **Use AND** to narrow your search and find materials that contain all your keywords, e.g. smartphones and cognition - finds articles that contain both these words.
- **Use OR** to broaden a search and find resources that contain any of your keywords. Use OR to link works with similar meanings, e.g. opinion or view or attitude
- **Use of double quote marks, ""** you can use quote marks around a phrase to ensure the exact phrase is searched for, e.g. "social psychology".

### Where will you search

- This will depend on what information you need, e.g. books, journal articles.
- **Books** can provide a useful overview / introduction to a topic. Brookes LibrarySearch <https://oxfordbrookes.on.worldcat.org/discovery> enables you to find specific books or books on a topic - search by keyword.

- **Journals** are academic magazines, published regularly throughout the year. They are key resources for finding current research on a topic, published as journal articles. LibrarySearch is also a good starting point for finding articles - search by keyword.
- **Databases** are key tools for finding research. **They provide access to journal articles, newspapers, images and more. Key databases for Psychology** are PsycINFO and Web of Science which you can access from the library:  
<https://www.brookes.ac.uk/library/resources-and-services/course-resource-help/psychology>

## Search and evaluate

An example search on a Database:

- Example topic - An examination into the potential negative consequences of smartphone use on everyday cognition.
- Keywords - smartphone / cognition.
- Additional keywords - smartphone or “smart phone” or “mobile phone” / cognition or “cognitive failure” or “cognitive ability”.

### Our search would look like this:

smartphone or “smart phone” or “mobile phone”

AND

cognition or “cognitive failure” or “cognitive ability”

## Review and refine your search

- **Database filter options** include date range, age, language, publication type. On PsycINFO, additional filters may include tests & measures, methodology.
- When you find relevant articles, have a look at the keywords the authors have used, can you add any to your search to help find more research.
- Have a look at the reference lists of relevant articles to find more research.

## Manage and organise your searches - save searches / create alerts

- Register and sign in to save searches onto the database to rerun later and to set up alerts for a saved search and be emailed with new articles that match your search.
- Manage your results - select relevant articles and email / save / print.
- Consider using a reference management software, such as EndNote, to store the references you find <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/library/how-to/use-endnote/>

## Further help

The Library’s [Course resource help for Psychology webpages](#) provide further information to help you, including Referencing guidance, Access to databases and more.

Contact your Librarian, Helen Whittaker, [hkwhittaker@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:hkwhittaker@brookes.ac.uk) for help with your literature search or other library queries.