CINAHL Plus
Advanced Searching

A workbook prepared by the Ulster University Library Life & Health Sciences Subject Team on searching the CINAHL Plus database.

Life & Health Sciences Library Team
ULSTER UNIVERSITY
Introduction

The aim of this workbook is to show you how to carry out an advanced search using CINAHL Plus.

Learning Outcomes:

- Accessing CINAHL Plus from the Portal
- The Advanced Search screen and how CINAHL Subject Headings work.
- Keyword searching
- Advanced searching techniques; truncation and wildcards
- Advanced searching techniques; proximity searching
- Combining terms
- Planning a search
- Carrying out a search in CINAHL Plus
- Applying Limits.
- Viewing results and finding full text.
- Creating a personal account to save articles, searches and set up alerts.
- Exporting article citations to Refworks.

What is CINAHL Plus?

CINAHL Plus is the main nursing database in the Library and indexes over 5,000 nursing and allied health journals with coverage going back to 1937. You can also access some full text material including nearly 80 full text journals plus legal cases, clinical innovations, critical paths, drug records, research instruments and clinical trials.

Accessing CINAHL Plus from the Portal

- Log on to the Portal at [http://portal.ulster.ac.uk](http://portal.ulster.ac.uk)
- Select the Library & ICT tab.
- Select the Databases link, displayed under Key Services, on the right hand side of the screen. The A-Z listing of Library Databases is displayed on the screen.
- Click on C and scroll down to select CINAHL Plus.
- On the next screen click on Proceed to open the database.
- If you see this screen, enter Ulster and click on the Ulster University link.
AUTHENTICATION
You will need to identify yourself as an Ulster University user to gain access to the database. On the screen showing an artist's impression of the new Belfast campus, enter your student email address and Ulster Network password. This will authenticate you for the current browsing session.

Advanced Search Screen and CINAHL Subject Headings

CINAHL Plus automatically opens up into the Advanced Search screen, with the Suggest Subject Terms function selected.

What are Subject Headings?
Databases such as CINAHL Plus rather than relying solely on terminology use a thesaurus of standardised, preferred indexing terms to describe the content of each article; these terms are known as Subject Headings or CINAHL Headings. CINAHL will try and match or ‘map’ your topic to the closest matching Subject Heading in their thesaurus.

Checking your term against the Subject Headings will:

- Direct you to the preferred subject term that the database considers to be a best match for your term e.g. for bed sores CINAHL Plus will recommend the heading; pressure ulcers.

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Find all articles indexed under that subject heading regardless of the terminology used by the article authors e.g. the heading pressure ulcer also covers the terms; bed sores, pressure sores and decubitus ulcers.

Keyword Searching

Not every term has a Subject Heading so you may need to carry out a keyword search. CINAHL Plus will always give you the option of searching by keyword at the bottom of the list of suggested subject headings. When you use this function you will be searching within the article title and abstract.
You will also need to use this in conjunction with a subject heading search if you want to make sure that all articles containing your terms, regardless of context, are retrieved. This stage is necessary if carrying out a systematic review or higher level of research (e.g. final year dissertation, Masters or PhD) and you will need to use your own judgement and knowledge to decide how deeply you need to search a topic.

### Truncation and Wildcards

When searching by keyword databases will usually only find the exact term you enter and not any plurals or variations. In order to make sure that all variants of a term are found a number of advanced search symbols can be used.

- * is the truncation symbol, use to find all the various different endings of a term  
  e.g. herb* will find herb, herbs, herbal, herbalist, herbalism
- ? is the wildcard symbol that will replace 1 character within a word  
  e.g. organis?ation will find organisation and organization
- # is the wildcard symbol that will replace 1 or 0 characters within a word  
  e.g. behavio#r will find behaviour and behaviour

Wildcards can be useful for finding both British and American word variations.

It is not always necessary to use advanced searching techniques, only use when they make sense for the context of the question.

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### Proximity Searching

CINAHL Plus default is to search for the terms as a phrase and in the order entered e.g. a search for chronic pain will find terms right next to each other in that order.

Proximity searching enables you to search for two or more terms within a set number of words in any order. It is useful technique to use when you want to find terms that are near each other. The proximity operator in CINAHL Plus is N followed by the number of words. You can also use truncation with the proximity function.

- chronic N3 pain* will find the terms within 3 words of each other regardless of the order.
  e.g. articles about painful chronic illness as well as chronic musculoskeletal pain

### Combining Terms

You will need to combine terms using OR, AND in order to retrieve the most relevant results.

Use **OR** to combine terms which are similar this will widen a search and increase the number of articles retrieved.

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### Diagram

Any articles that contain 1 or more of the terms will be found.

- physiotherapy
- hydrotherapy
- exercise

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Use **AND** to combine terms which are different, this will narrow and reduced the number of articles retrieved.

Remember to always combine all the similar terms with **OR** before you combine with **AND**, the database won’t be able to understand what you are asking it to look for otherwise.

Next we will carry out an example search using CINAHL Plus.

**Planning a search**

Database collections can be huge (e.g. CINAHL Plus holds over 3.8 million individual journal citations) and you need to be prepared and specific about what information you want to find. It makes sense to plan your search before you start; ask yourself, what information do I want to find out?

In the remainder of this workbook we will use this example question:

‘**Effectiveness of taping for the treatment of plantar heel pain**’.

Look at the question and ask, what are the key topics or concepts and how else may they be described:

It is a good idea to write down the key topics and then list any variations or alternative terms that could also be used to describe them.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your search terms</th>
<th>Other ways of describing your topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>taping</td>
<td>tape, Kinesio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantar heel pain</td>
<td>Plantar fascia, heel pain, heel spur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember

- Not all topics will have many or any variations or alternative terms
- Use your own professional knowledge and judgement to decide how in depth you want to go into the search process.
- When thinking of terms, keep in mind that most databases are produced in America and use American terminology e.g. intellectual disabilities rather than learning disabilities.
- Don’t type the question into the search box, this is an unsystematic method of searching and will return too few relevant results.
- It can be beneficial to carry out a scoping search first:
  - look at the Library book stock, an up to date text book on your chosen subject area can help familiarise you with the subject and with the terminology used by academic publications.
  - read an up to date review article, this will summarize the research on a specific topic, e.g. search The Cochrane Library or limit to review in the databases.

In the Advanced Search type in the first set of search terms starting with plantar heel pain as illustrated below.

CINAHL Plus displays a list of suggested Headings; in this example Heel Pain is the most appropriate suggestion.
Click on Scope displayed to the right of the Heading to view further information about the term. This may be a definition or information about other related Headings.

Close the scope note.

To select the term click into the box to the left.

To the right of the Heading Heel Pain there is an Explode and a Major Concept checkbox.
If there is a tick in the **Explode** box narrower or specific terms are available, if the box is greyed out then the term is standalone. In this example there are no additional Headings.

When you select **Major Concept** the database will only return articles in which your chosen Subject Heading is the main subject within the article. This is a limiter and should be used with caution at advanced searching level.

Ensure the tick remains in the checkbox next to **Include All Subheadings** and finally, click on the **Search Database** link displayed on the right side of the screen.

The details of the search and the number of articles found will be recorded in the Search History/Alerts part of the screen.

Repeat with the next two terms in the plantar heel pain set of search terms: *plantar fasciitis and heel spur*. You will now have 3 terms in the Search History/Alerts box.
Each of these three searches is related to the plantar heel pain aspect of your topic. You now need to combine these searches to create one set of results containing all the records together.
In the Search History/Alerts area of the screen tick the checkboxes beside each search set and click on Search with OR.

This will create a fourth search set, S4, in the Search History/Alerts area.

You are now ready to search for the next set of search terms.

Type the term tapping into the Search box and click on Search.
The CINAHL Heading *Taping and Strapping* is displayed at the top of the list. Check the Scope note to find out extra information on what this heading is about.

This heading fits our question so select and search database.
Repeat with the process with the next search term *tape*. This time a tick appears in the Explode box.

Click on the term Tapes to open up the wider indexing tree and view a list of the more specific terms. This subject tree is a list of all the subject headings available and is ranked by hierarchical rather than alphabetical relationship.

In this example Tapes has 1 additional specific heading (Athletic Tape); this is displayed, indented below the main term. If you don’t wish to include the narrower terms you need to remove the tick in the Explode box. For this example, we want to include the narrower term so will keep Explode selected.

A + symbol will appear beside the term in the Search History, to indicate it has been exploded.

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Repeat with the final term, *kinesio*

This time none of the blue CINAHL Headings seem appropriate.

Scroll down and select the Search as Keyword option which is available at the bottom of the list of CINAHL Headings.

This will search for records where your search phrase is contained in the title and abstract.

Scroll up and click on Search Database. Combine this second set of terms with **OR**.
This will create an eighth search set, S8, in the Search History/Alerts area.

Next combine the sets to find articles which discuss taping in relation to plantar heel pain. To do this you must combine S4 (the heel pain, heel spur, plantar fasciitis search) with S8 (the taping, kinesio search).

Tick the checkboxes beside S4 and S8 and this time click on Search with AND.

An eighth set of results, S9, is created.
Applying Limits
You can apply limits to a search by selecting the Edit button at the end of the search row, in this example for S9.

Scroll down to the Limit your results section of the screen.
Limit your results to those published from 2000-2016 and in the English Language.

Click on Save, displayed at the bottom of the screen.

Click on View Results (in the Actions column) for S9 to view the records retrieved.

Viewing Results and finding Full Text
Each record is displayed like so; title of the article is in blue, authors, journal title and publication details - date, volume, part number and the page numbers.
This fuller record lists the CINAHL Headings (major subjects and minor subjects) assigned to the article. The abstract will provide you with a summary of the original article and should help you decide if the journal article is going to be relevant (not every record will include an abstract).

CINAHL Plus, like most academic databases, provides bibliographic details only and you will usually have to link out to another supplier to find the full text of an article.

Click on the U Find it button to check the Library’s Electronic Journals Catalogue, to see if we subscribe to the journal the article appears in.
On the next screen select a supplier by opening one of the hyperlinks, in this example either from Taylor and Francis or Informa Healthcare.

You will then be linked to the article, where you can read online, download or save/print the pdf.
If the U Find It cannot link you to the full text, the following message will be displayed:

You can check the Library Catalogue and/or Google Scholar for full text. You will need to copy and paste the title of the journal/article into each respective resource. If no full text is available can use the Library Document Delivery Service, for more information so to http://library.ulster.ac.uk/documentdelivery/

Saving your Search History
In order to save your search history from the current session and re-run it at a later date you must create a CINAHL Plus account.
Video Guide – Saving a search

Click on the Save Searches /Alerts button on the Search History / Alerts panel.
Go to Create a new Account and complete the onscreen form and Save Changes. Give the search a name and select Saved Search to save a search or Alert to set up an email alert to receive any new results.

If you wish to use both functions, you will need to first save the search and then set up the alert
Give the search a name and click on Save to finish

Not every article in your results list will be relevant. Select any records which are by clicking on the Add to folder icon displayed on each record and if you have a personal account these will also be saved permanently.

The folder icon will then change
Scroll to the very top of the screen and click on Folder.

Only the selected articles will be displayed in the folder. From here you can print, email, save, or export the records using the output functions displayed along the right side of the screen.

You can also create folders to organise and save articles into.
Retrieving a Saved Search

To retrieve a search, Sign In and click on the Folder icon.

A list of all your saved searches will be displayed.

Click on the Retrieve Saved Search link below the Plantar pain and taping search:

The search will be displayed in the Search History/Alerts panel. Click on Rerun, in the Actions column, for search S8 to review the results.
Select records to export to RefWorks using the Add to Folder function. Go to the top of the screen and click on Folder.

Select the articles you want to send to Refworks and click on Export

At the Export Manager screen select Direct Export to Refworks and click on Save. RefWorks will open automatically on the screen and the references moved over to your Last Imported Folder.
You should now be able to carry out an advanced search in CINAHL Plus.

Help

CINAHL Plus has an excellent Help section find it at the top of the search screen.

Don't worry if you are having difficulties using the database; just contact a member of the Life and Health Sciences subject team who will be happy to help.

For further information please contact your Subject Librarian

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