

## What is PsycINFO?

PsycINFO is the most important database for finding journal articles for psychology and behavioural sciences. It covers journal articles, book chapters, theses and websites. PsycINFO is produced by the American Psychological Association.

## Accessing PsycINFO

PsycINFO can be accessed via the Library Home Page. Select either Databases or Subject Guides – Psychology.

## Search Steps

### 1. Select the search terms

Write down the key concepts in your topic. e.g. are the causes of alcoholism genetic or environmental?

#### Key concepts:

Alcoholism | genetic | environmental

### 2. Brainstorm

Consider any alternative terms or ideas. Authors often refer to the same concept using different terms. If you only search on one term, you risk missing articles that use different terms. Consider:

- Synonyms e.g. genetic | genes | heritable | hereditary
- Spelling variations – most databases use North American spelling e.g. behavior.

- Variations on a word stem/plurals e.g. alcoholic, alcoholism etc.
- Acronyms – Attention Deficit Disorder, ADD
- If relevant, you may need to change common terms, databases use formal terminology e.g. smoking – nicotine.

### 3. Use Truncation

Use a truncation symbol at the end of a word stem to pick up variant word ends and plurals. On PsycINFO this symbol is an asterisk (\*), e.g. child\* to find child, children, childhood etc.

You can also use the asterisk in the middle of a word to indicate an unlimited number of characters, e.g. behavio\*r will find behaviour or behaviour

## Enter Your Search

- Enter your search into the search form.
- Use AND, OR or NOT to combine your search words.

**AND** – finds articles which contain all terms in every article, e.g. alcohol\* and environment\* and gene\*

**OR** – finds records which contain either term e.g. gene\* or hereditary

**NOT** – finds records which contain one term but not the other e.g. sleep not dreams

- Select the fields to search from the drop-down menu (keyword is default)
- The search can be limited by publication type, language, population, age or audience (see over for more information).

## View Results

All Publication Types 9286 Journals 7697 Peer-Reviewed Journals 7215 Conferences 352 Books 146

The results page lists the different publication types as tabs. Click on one of the tabs to see the results, e.g. peer-reviewed journals for articles appearing in academic journals.

## Save, Print or Email Results

- Mark the required records by clicking in the checkbox next to the record.
- Click **Save/Print/Email records**
- Click the drop down menu if you wish to change the output option (short format includes the abstract)
- Click **Email, Save or Print Preview**

[Update Marked List](#) [Save, Print, Email](#)

## Find the fulltext of the Article

- Click **Search for Fulltext** to find out if the article is available online.
- If the article is not available online, click either **Search by ISSN** or **Search by Journal Title** to see whether it is available in the Library.

[View Record](#) | [References](#) | [Search for full text](#)

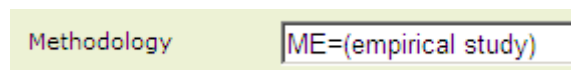
## Other Search Tips

### Limiting your search

Applying a limit to your search will help refine and focus your search to particular types of articles. Limits can be applied from the search screen, scroll to the bottom of the search form to view the different types of limits. Some of the useful ones are:

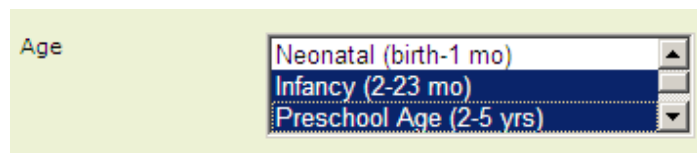
#### Empirical Study

Click Browse Methodology and select Empirical Study.



#### Age

Select relevant ages from the Age window (hold down the control key to select multiple ages).



### Cited Reference Linking

Cited reference searching enables you to find articles that have cited a particular author, article or book. This is a very valuable method of following the development of a subject through the literature. Follow the **Cited By** links from the article/chapter record. Cited By links also appear in the Reference Lists of articles.

### Thesaurus

The Thesaurus lists the descriptors (or subject headings) used by the database. Use the Thesaurus to help you find relevant articles.

- Click Search Tools tab
- Click **Thesaurus**
- Type a term into the box and click Go

## Search Alerts or RSS Feed

Setting up a Search Alert or RSS Feed enables you to keep up with new articles published on a topic.

**Search alert** – new articles matching your search topic will be sent to you via email.

**RSS feed** – new articles will appear in your RSS reader

- Perform your search and on the results screen click **Alert Me**.
- Register first to create a personal profile.
- Select the format, expiry date and delivery method (email or RSS) and click Save.
- To delete or renew alerts, click *Please log in to My Research*

## Refining Your Search

### Too few records?

You need to broaden your search. Try the following:

- Have you made a spelling mistake?
- Use North American spelling and terminology
- Think of alternate terms or synonyms.
- Find a useful record and look at the Descriptor terms used in the record. Try using some of the relevant descriptors in another search.
- Look in the Thesaurus for useful terms.
- Truncate your search e.g. cognit\* to find cognitive, cognition etc.

### Too many records?

Your search is too general. Try the following to make it more specific:

- Add another concept to your search and use the connector AND.
- Apply a limit to your search (e.g. empirical study, age).
- Look in the Thesaurus or Descriptor field of records to find more specific terms to use in another search.
- If you know the preferred format for your terms, you could remove truncation from your search.

## Further help ...

Click Help within the database for online help.  
Contact Kerry Gilmour, Social Sciences Information Librarian (ext. 4986 or [kerry.gilmour@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:kerry.gilmour@canterbury.ac.nz))

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