

Strategies for searching article databases

Strategy 1: Use Thesaurus Terms

PubMed/Medline:

Qualitative Research; Nursing Methodology Research; Health Knowledge, Attitudes, Practice; Attitude to Health; Attitude of Health Personnel

Methods headings: Focus Groups; Interviews as topic; Narration

CINAHL:

Explode the **Qualitative Studies** subject heading, and see what you get. Explode will include the following CINAHL Headings: Action Research, Ethnographic Research, Ethnological Research, Ethnonursing Research, Grounded Theory, Naturalistic Inquiry, Phenomenological Research.

Experiment with related CINAHL subject headings such as Focus Groups, Narratives, Interviews, Descriptive Research, Descriptive Statistics, Audiorecording, Videorecording, Diaries, Observational Methods, Theoretical Models

Strategy 2: Use keywords

Some examples:

qualitative, ethnograph*, phenomenol*, ethnonurs*, grounded theor*, purposive sample, hermeneutic*, heuristic*, semiotics, lived experience*, narrative*, life experiences, cluster sample, action research, observational method, content analysis, thematic analysis, constant comparative method, field stud*, theoretical sample, discourse analysis, focus group*, ethnological research, ethnomethodolog*, interview*

Strategy 3: Use Qualitative Research Filters

Qualitative Research Filters are pre-formulated search strategies that have been constructed by librarians to help you retrieve articles in databases that deal with qualitative research. You can use the filter and then combine the results with your subject.

- **In PubMed:** There is a special query interface for Health Services Research (<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/nichsr/hedges/search.html>) which has a category for Qualitative Research
- **In CINAHL:** Refine/Limit the set to **Clinical Queries**. Select within the drop-down Clinical Queries menu: Qualitative-High Sensitivity; Qualitative-High Specificity; Qualitative-Best Balance. High Sensitivity is the broadest search, to include ALL relevant material, but may also include less relevant materials. High Specificity is the most targeted search to include only the most relevant result set, but may miss some relevant materials. Best Balance retrieves the best balance between Sensitivity and Specificity.
- **In PsycINFO:** Limit to *Clinical queries: Qualitative*, OR, try the same search, limiting to Methodology: select Qualitative Study, Interview, or Focus Groups under the Methodology drop-down menu. Click Search.

This information comes from: <http://guides.nyu.edu/qualitative> where you can find even more tips and tricks

Where to find databases:

- Health and biological sciences pages: <http://www.mcgill.ca/library/find/subjects/health>
- Database A to Z list: <http://www.library.mcgill.ca/atozdatabases/>

Tips when searching databases:

- What are the essential parts of your search? You will not always be searching “qualitative” or other similar terms
- Subject headings will not always be useful, especially for qualitative concepts or other less concrete concepts, so use keywords in addition to or instead of subject headings
- Consider a broader topic if you are not finding anything on your focused question
- If you want an overview, you can limit/refine to reviews, systematic reviews, meta-syntheses

Cited reference searching: move forward in time from an important paper – see who has cited that paper. You can do this in:

- Web of Science
- Scopus
- Google Scholar

Unpublished theses and dissertations can be an important source of qualitative research.

McGill guide to searching these and dissertations: <http://www.mcgill.ca/library/find/theses>

- eScholarship at McGill: open access full text of McGill theses and dissertations
- Proquest Dissertations and Theses: subscription full text access to North American theses and dissertations

McGill WorldCat Catalogue: <http://www.mcgill.ca/library/>

- Search for Qualitative Research AND <your topic>
- Use the format option on the left hand side to limit to books
- Use the drop-down menu under the search box to widen your search to Quebec libraries or libraries world-wide

Data and statistics: <http://www.mcgill.ca/library/find/edrs>

Need help? Contact your librarian!

Find your subject specialist: <http://www.mcgill.ca/library/contact/askus/liaison>