



The Search Process

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Analyse information need

What do you need to know? Why? Answering these questions will help decide where and how to search:

Researching a topic for a term paper? Needing background information to learn more about the topic? Answering a clinical question? How many citations needed? How far back does the search need to go?

Get background information

Use [MedlinePlus](#), [Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy](#), or [FIRSTConsult](#) to find medical terminology and definitions, abbreviations, summaries etc.

Search [Library catalogue](#) by title, author or subject heading to find textbooks, handbooks, dictionaries, or topical encyclopaedias that will give background information.

Some subject headings for a subject search in the catalogue:

Audiology: hearing, hearing disorders, deafness, communicative disorders, cochlear nerve, hearing aids, etc.

Speech Sciences: speech therapy, speech disorders, communicative disorders, language acquisition, speech pathology, stuttering, autism, etc.

Browse Life Sciences Libraries' bookshelves at:

WL 340 – Speech and Language disorders of neurologic origin

WM 475 – Speech and Language disorders of psychogenic origin

WV 270 – Deafness

WV 440 – Cleft palate

WV 500 – Physiology of speech

Books and journals on education, gerontology, psycholinguistics, learning disabilities, children etc. could also be at other UBC Library branches such as Education, Koerner, Hamber, or UBC Okanagan. These can be ordered using the [Doc Del service](#).

Design the Search strategy

Prepare

Create a focussed *question* and separate the main concepts by using PICO (Problem, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome), or SPICE (Setting, Perspective, Intervention, Control, Evaluation). Think about synonyms and other words to use for each concept. Track your ideas with this [worksheet](#).

Choose places to search – Catalogue, Internet or

Find journal articles, book chapters, theses by searching *online indexes/databases* appropriate to your topic, for example:

Audiology and Speech topics:

[LLBA-Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts\(CSA\)](#)

[Communication and Mass Media Complete \(EBSCO\)](#)

Clinical topics:

[Pubmed](#) | [Tutorial](#)

[Medline \(OVIDSP\)](#) | [Medline Tutorial](#)

[Embase \(OVIDSP\)](#)

[CINAHL \(EBSCO\)](#) | [CINAHL Handout](#)

Education and Psychosocial aspects:

[ERIC \(CSA\)](#) or [ERIC \(EBSCO\)](#)

[PsycInfo \(EBSCO\)](#)

Assistive devices:

[Compendex](#)

Measurement tools:

[Mental Measurements Yearbook](#) (Buros)

[Health and Psychosocial Instruments - HaPI \(OVIDSP\)](#)

Find websites on the *internet* by using search engines such as Google, or Google Scholar.

Tip: Use the Advanced Screens to improve your search.

Use the links to websites listed on the [Audiology and Speech Sciences](#) subject page.

Searching techniques

Use the *thesaurus*, or tree, to find Subject Headings/Descriptors/Mesh that match your concepts, and to discover additional synonyms or concepts for your topic.

From the Help screens or [chart](#) find out how to deal with variant spellings, plural etc. and which *symbols* to use to truncate or to use as wildcards.

Build search statements by using Boolean Logic connectors to combine:

AND to narrow

OR to add more terms

NOT to exclude

Limit, or **refine** the search using age groups, publication period, publication type, study group, language

Snowball by mining for *cited references* using the above online indexes, [Web of Science](#), or article reference lists.

Get the fulltext

Use the UBC elink button to see whether UBC has an article electronically or in the print collection, or

Search for the **journal title** in *One Search* or under *Journals*.

Get books or bound journals from the Automated Storage Retrieval System ([ASRS](#)).

Get books or articles from other UBC library branches via [UBC Docdel](#); note, the link is at the end of the record in the catalogue.

Use [CISTI Orders](#) or [Interlibrary Library Loan](#) to order items not at UBC Libraries – takes 2 to 5 days for articles; 7 - 10 days for books.

Get fulltext *dissertations and theses* from 1997 via [Proquest Dissertations and Theses](#), or other sources. See [FAQs on Dissertations and Theses](#)

Evaluate the information

Do the results meet your information need? Research is an iterative process and information in the results may lead to changing your search terms and strategy.

How reputable is the information?

Generally, the health sciences online indexes either only include peer-reviewed scholarly journals; or allow you to select “scholarly” or “peer review” as a publication type.

Websites from the Internet need to be more carefully considered using these criteria:

Accuracy – how was the information obtained? Is it true?

Authority – what are the authors’ credentials?

Objectivity – is this opinion or for gain?

Coverage – What is included? Are there fees? Is the information too basic?

Currency – When last was the page updated? Is the information still up to date?

Manage your results, cite references, and stay up to date

Most databases can sort, change display, print, save, email, or export to [Refworks](#).

Refworks helps keep the process organized, and together with Write-N-Cite (remember to download this to your Word programme at home), is a great aid for creating your in text citations and bibliography.

Other useful links to dictionaries, style guides, abbreviations, English usage etc. are at [Writer’s Toolbox](#).

Stay up to date. You can create a personal account in most databases to save your search strategy and to set up **alerts**. Most individual journals also allow you to sign up for alerts and to view contents pages. You can also set up RSS feeds and be alerted as websites are updated.

For more information

Contact your subject librarian: *Charlotte Beck* charlotte.beck@ubc.ca.