Advanced Searching in PsycINFO

**TIP 1:** If you know you are looking for a specific author, type the author’s name into the search box and change the adjacent dropdown menu to AU Author. Depending on the author’s name, you may need to put in both the first and last name. Results for common last names (e.g., Smith, Jones, etc.) are likely to be plentiful and so you may want to include their first name or initial to help narrow the search.

This same tip applies if you are looking for a specific article. You can type in the first few words of the article title in quotation marks and change the dropdown menu to TI Title.

**TIP 2:** When searching phrases, be sure to use quotation marks so that the database knows you are phrase searching. For example, if you are interested in job performance, you will want to put “job performance” in quotes.

**TIP 3:** Be sure to think of synonyms that are related to your search terms. For example, “employee performance” might be a useful phrase to get even more results on job performance.

If you want to begin doing more complex searches with synonyms, you can nest search terms together using parentheses. For example, in one search field you might have the following:

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("job performance" OR "employee performance")
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You also could do the following using two fields:

```
performance
AND
(job OR employee)
```

**TIP 4:** Connectors such as AND and OR can be used to expand or narrow your search.

1. **AND** = narrows your search
2. **OR** = expands your search

Think of these connectors logically. AND narrows your search because the database is looking for articles that contain both terms. If you are searching for X and Y, then you will only get results that contain BOTH X and Y.

But if you use OR, the database is looking for articles that contain either term. In this case, a search will return articles that contain EITHER X or Y.
TIP 5: If your search words might be pluralized or contain multiple endings, you can use an asterisk (*) to ensure that the database picks up all variations of a word. Here’s an example:

aprais*

This search term will retrieve articles containing the words “appraise,” “appraisal,” “appraisals,” “appraising,” and so on.

PsycINFO usually will pick up alternate endings without the asterisk, but you might still use it just to be on the safe side.

TIP 6: Sometimes, search terms have spelling variations that will affect search results. This often occurs due to slight differences between English used in America with other English-speaking countries (e.g., across Europe, Canada, Australia, etc.)

An example of this is the word “organization.” This is the Americanized spelling of the word, but outside of the U.S. the term is likely to be spelled as “organisation.” Fortunately, there is a way to search for both terms simultaneously by using a question mark (?).

organisat?ion

When the question mark is used as a placemark of the letter that varies, the database knows to search for the word where ? can take the form of any letter.

Other times, there may be word spellings that add letters. For example, the word “labor” is the Americanized spelling, but outside of the U.S. the term is spelled “labour.” In this case, the letter U has been added to the word. To search for both spellings, you can use a pound sign (#).

labo#r

When a pound sign is inserted into the place where the added letter would be, the database knows to search for words where there may or may not be a character. This will return results containing both “labor” and “labour.”

PsycINFO usually will pick up alternate spellings without the question mark or pound sign, but you might still use them just to be on the safe side.

TIP 7: After you’ve conducted a search, use the limiters on the left side of the screen to narrow your results. Here, you will find a column where you can specify dates, as well as use the “Subject Major Heading” limiter – this will help you immensely!
There are additional limiters that will be very helpful to you. The “Publication” limiter allows you to select specific journals within which results are found. The “Classification” limiter allows you to narrow by area of interest. The “Methodology” limiter allows you narrow by type of research methods used in the articles.

For dates, I generally recommend limiting to a recent time frame (e.g., 2005-present). This will ensure you are getting the most recent results. An exception to this might be if you are in need of historical research (e.g., the 80’s, 70’s, 60’s, or whenever).

Also, make sure you ALWAYS select the “Peer Reviewed” limiter. This will remove non-academic sources such as newspapers and magazines from your search.

TIP 8: At the very top of the screen there is an option labeled “Thesaurus.” You can use this feature to help you think of synonyms, additional words and phrases, and subject terms that are related to your topic. When you go into a thesaurus, type in a simple word or phrase into the search box and select the “Term Contains” radio button.

Note that not every term you search for will be found; that isn’t the point. The point of using the Thesaurus feature is to help you locate related words and phrases that you may not have thought of otherwise that you can then use to conduct additional searches.

Also, when you find words and terms in the thesaurus that look like a link (i.e., blue and underlined) that means they are Subject Terms. To get really specific results related to that term, you can use Subject Terms as search terms on the main search screen and change the dropdown box to SU Subject Terms.

TIP 9: If you create an account for this database, there will be additional features you can use that may be helpful to you. To create an account, click the link at the top of the screen labeled “Sign In.” Next, click “Create a New Account” and proceed to fill in the information.

Now that you have an account, you can save abstracts and articles to your own personal folder for future use. When you come across a search result that you like, click on the “Add to Folder” icon under each entry. This will add the entry to your folder; it will stay in your folder until you delete it using the “Delete Items” button.

You also can create multiple folders within your main folder. When you go into your main folder, on the bottom left side of the screen is a folder icon labeled “New” right next to “My Custom.” If you click on that icon, you can create a new subfolder; you can name it whatever you like and save articles in that folder. This is helpful for organizing articles by theme or for different classes.
You can view your folder(s) at any time by clicking the “Folder” icon at the top of the screen. From here, you can print and e-mail all or part of your folder.

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**TIP 10:** Another benefit of having an account is that you can sign up for search alerts. This is useful because you will be alerted when new articles are published according to the criteria you select when setting up the alert. To set up an alert, first conduct the search you want. Then, look near the top right of the screen for a link labeled “Alert / Save / Share.” After clicking on it, select “E-Mail Alert.” An alert window will pop up allowing you to enter in an e-mail address. Be sure to save the alert by clicking on the yellow “Save Alert” button at the bottom.

PsycINFO does not have the option to sign up for journal or Table of Contents alerts.