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## Searching in PsycINFO (Ovid)

**PsycINFO** is a database that contains psychological literature. PsycINFO is searched using a combination of subject headings and keywords. It is strongly recommended that you search other databases in addition to PsycINFO when conducting research.

Access PsycINFO through the [Psychology database list](#).

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### Keywords and subject headings

Literature in PsycINFO can be found using both keywords and subject headings. **Keywords** find a term in an article record (not the full text), while **subject headings** find articles about a topic. Subject headings in PsycINFO are called **APA Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms**. It is recommended to use both keywords and subject headings when searching in PsycINFO.

Keywords	Subject headings
Find an exact phrase in the title, abstract, etc. of an article	Find articles about a concept
Not arranged in any order	Arranged in a hierarchy, with broad terms at the top and specific terms at the bottom. Articles are given the most relevant subject headings possible
Need to search for all variations of a term (e.g. plurals, spelling variations) and alternate terms to make a search comprehensive	Automatically include variations of terms
Searching multiple keywords can be time consuming	Quick and easy to use
Good for finding emerging research about concepts that have not been assigned subject headings yet	Aren't always up to date; may not be discipline-specific
Use natural language	Use medical/health jargon

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### Using PsycINFO

PsycINFO searches are conducted line-by-line, with each concept searched separately and then combined with Boolean operators (AND and OR). The search history appears at the top of the page, followed by the search box. Articles found in a search appear at the bottom of the page.

The following searches aim to find an article comparing two approaches to treating depression - antidepressants and cognitive behaviour therapy. These terms will be searched separately to ensure you get the more relevant results.

To start searching in PsycINFO, type your first keyword into the search box. Make sure the **'Map Term to Subject Heading'** box is checked - this will tell the database to automatically search for a matching MeSH term to use.

**Advanced Search** | [Basic Search](#) | [Find Citation](#) | [Search Tools](#) | [Search Fields](#) | [Multi-Field Search](#)

1 Resource selected | [Hide](#) | [Change](#)

**PsycINFO** 1806 to October Week 5 2018

Enter keyword or phrase (\* or \$ for truncation)

**Keyword**  Author  Title  Journal

**Limits**  Include Multimedia  Map Term to Subject Heading (close)

Peer Reviewed Journal  All Journals  Latest Update  
 Human  English Language  Abstracts

Publication Year  -

The next page contains a list of subject headings. In the example below, "[Depression \(Emotion\)](#)" is the subject heading and depression.mp is the keyword.

Select	Subject Heading	Auto Explode	Focus	Scope
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Anaclitic Depression</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="button" value="i"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Atypical Depression</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="button" value="i"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Beck Depression Inventory</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="button" value="i"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">"Depression (Emotion)"</a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="button" value="i"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Endogenous Depression</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="button" value="i"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Late Life Depression</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="button" value="i"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">"Long-term Depression (Neuronal)"</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="button" value="i"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Major Depression</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="button" value="i"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Postpartum Depression</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="button" value="i"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Reactive Depression</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="button" value="i"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Recurrent Depression</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="button" value="i"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Spreading Depression</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="button" value="i"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Treatment Resistant Depression</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="button" value="i"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Zungs Self Rating Depression Scale</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="button" value="i"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	depression.mp. search as Keyword			

Before selecting a subject heading, click the 'Scope' icon (  ). This will give you the definition of the subject heading to ensure you're using it correctly. Don't use a term if it's not relevant - use another one instead. If PsycINFO does not recommend any relevant subject headings, or if it recommends you a subject heading from one of your other search concepts, don't select any, and use the keyword instead.

Click on the subject heading to see where it falls in the hierarchy. This will show you if there's a more specific term you could be using instead. Unlike Medline, PsycINFO auto explodes subject headings - this means that it automatically selects all the subject headings that appear in the hierarchy underneath the heading you select. The screenshot below is the hierarchy for the subject heading '[Major Depression](#)'.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Major Depression</b>	124098
	[Used For]	
	<a href="#">Agitated Depression</a>	
	<a href="#">Depressive Reaction (Neurotic)</a>	
	<a href="#">Dysphoria</a>	
	<a href="#">Melancholia</a>	
	[Broader Terms]	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Affective Disorders</a>	14291
	[Narrower Terms]	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Anaclitic Depression</a>	66
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Dysthymic Disorder</a>	1490
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Endogenous Depression</a>	1245
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Late Life Depression</a>	696
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Postpartum Depression</a>	4810
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Reactive Depression</a>	300
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Recurrent Depression</a>	845
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Treatment Resistant Depression</a>	2384
	[Related Terms]	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Atypical Depression</a>	201
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Bipolar Disorder [+NT]</a>	27145
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Depression (Emotion)</a>	25620

[Used For] functions similarly to the 'Scope' of the subject heading by indicating synonyms for the term. [Broader Terms] refers to the terms *above* '[Major Depression](#)' in the subject heading hierarchy, and [Narrower Terms] refers to the terms *underneath* '[Major Depression](#)' in the hierarchy. Terms with [+NT] indicate a parent heading with further terms underneath it - for example, '[Bipolar Disorder \[+NT\]](#)' includes the terms '[Bipolar I Disorder](#)', '[Bipolar II Disorder](#)', '[Cyclothymic Disorder](#)', and '[Mania](#)'. [Related Terms] are similar headings suggested by PsycINFO. Uncheck the 'Auto Explode' box to stop the database from automatically selecting all headings underneath a term, or if the subject heading does not include any child headings.

Click 'Continue' to add the subject heading to your search history.

▼ Search History (1)

<input type="checkbox"/>	# ▲ Searches	Results	Type	Actions	Annotations
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 "Depression (Emotion)"/	25620	Advanced	Display Results More ▾	

Save Remove Combine with:

To add the keyword 'depression' to your search history, search for it again. Instead of selecting the subject heading, click the box next to 'depression.mp. *search as Keyword*' and click '**Continue**'. The search history below contains both a subject heading ("Depression (Emotion)"/) and a keyword (depression.mp.).

1	"Depression (Emotion)"/	25620
2	depression.mp.	331266

Search for all possible synonyms for each concept, then check the boxes next to them. Click OR to search for all the terms at once. Your search history will look like this:

1	"Depression (Emotion)"/	25620
2	depression.mp.	331266
3	Major Depression/	124098
4	1 or 2 or 3	331266

Repeat this process for all of your search concepts, then combine each OR line with AND. Below is the completed search history for this area of research. Lines 4, 7, and 11 are combinations of each concept. Line 12 searches these combinations to find all articles that include a search term from each concept.

1	"Depression (Emotion)"/	25620
2	depression.mp.	331266
3	Major Depression/	124098
4	1 or 2 or 3	331266
5	exp Antidepressant Drugs/	38693
6	antidepress*.mp.	49102
7	exp Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors/	12376
8	serotonin reuptake inhibitor*.mp.	9966
9	SSRI.mp.	4134
10	5 or 6 or 7 or 8 or 9	64813
11	exp Cognitive Behavior Therapy/	21760
12	cognitive behavio* therap*.mp.	30529
13	CBT.mp.	14263
14	11 or 12 or 13	33768
15	4 and 10 and 14	1288

If you need to add limits to your search, click the 'Additional Limits' button under the search box and add limits as appropriate.

The table below contains the advanced search syntax that can be incorporated into a PsycINFO search to improve its accuracy and increase the number of results.

**Note:** in this table, *n* stands for a number, not the letter n. To use these operators, replace the *n* with the number of letters or numbers you'd like in between terms.

Syntax	Symbol	Example	Function
Truncation	*	depress*	Finds 'alternate endings' to a word
Mandated wildcard	#	wom#n	Replaces 1 letter
Optional wildcard	?	p?ediatric	Replaces 0-1 letters
Nesting	(...)	behavio?r AND (depression OR anxiety)	Group similar terms in a search

Proximity	<b>adjn</b>	disturb* adj3 sleep	Find a word within a specified number of words (in any order)
Nested proximity	<b>(a or b) adjn (c or d)</b>	(breast OR skin) adj3 (cancer* OR neoplasm* OR tumo?r* OR malignan*)	Find terms combined with OR within a specified number of words from another group of words combined with OR.

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