

Thesaurus Searching

Since the terminology used in these databases is precise, the search software's thesaurus links you to each database's controlled vocabulary. If the **Check Keywords in Thesaurus** box is checked (most databases with a thesaurus already have this checked) on the main search page, you will see additional screens that ask you to select from the controlled vocabulary before the database returns your results. *For general keyword searching see OhioLINK Databases, Searching Guide #3.*

- **Keywords:** In the **Keyword** box, type a word or phrase related to your topic.

You will now have the option to enter a new thesaurus search, or Search, Focus, Explore, Expand, or Expand/Focus. You can also choose to search your term as a "keyword". The "keyword" search will search for your term in the author, article title, journal title, subject, and the abstract.

- **Search:** Selecting **Search** will return records that include your term as a subject heading. For example, selecting search for the term "schema" returns all records where "schema" is subject heading.

- **Focus:** Using **Focus** limits your subject search to records containing the term as a major topic of the article or book. For example, searching "cognition" by selecting **Search** returns more than 4,400 records in *PsycINFO*. By using **Focus**, you limit that to about 3,800 records.

- **Explore:** To view a subject heading in its thesaurus context, select **Explore**. **Explore** shows your term, possibly with a definition or scope note, plus any **Narrower Terms** and/or **Related Terms**. This list may provide a term that is more relevant to your search. For example, "electromagnetism" is listed as a **Narrower Terms** for "magnetism" in *Compendex*, and "electrodynamics" is a **Related Term**.

- **Expand:** To retrieve records that include your term as the subject and records that contain a **Narrower Term** as a subject heading, select **Expand**. This will increase the number of records you retrieve. For example, "competency based education" retrieves almost 7,000 records in *ERIC* as a subject. By selecting **Expand**, you will retrieve about 9,500 records that use "competency based education" and all of its **Narrower Term**.

- **Expand/Focus:** Combining the **Expand** and **Focus** options as **Expand/Focus** returns records that contain your term as a major subject or records that contain a **Narrower Term** as a major subject. For example, using **Focus** with "language skills" returns about 2,500 records in *ERIC*. **Expand** returns about 28,000 records. By using **Expand/Focus**, your results for "language skills" include just over 13,000 records all having "language skills" or one of its **Narrower Terms** as a major topic in the article or book.

Medical Databases using MeSH

Many of the medical databases use the MeSH thesaurus, created by the National Library of Medicine. *AIDSLINE*, *BIOETHICSLINE*, *CANCERLIT*, *CINAHL*, *HealthSTAR*, and *MEDLINE* use the MeSH thesaurus. After searching your term in the thesaurus and selecting **Search**, **Focus**, **Expand**, or **Expand/Focus**, these databases will give you a list of subheadings from which to select. You can choose to **Continue** and search only for your selected term, or you can choose one or more subheadings to combine with your term, narrowing your search. For example, in *MEDLINE* "cornea" returns more than 24,000 records using **Search** and clicking the **Continue** button. By using the same search but also checking the subheads "abnormalities" and "blood supply," you reduce the number of records to less than 1,400.

General Search Hints

- Use any combination of upper and lower case letters.
- When they are provided, use the links on the search screen, rather than your browser's forward and backward buttons. This will prevent your session from timing out.
- Using field qualifiers or search connectors (i.e., AND, OR, NOT, etc.) in the **Keyword or Phrase** box automatically shuts off the thesaurus and defaults to a **Keyword or Phrase** search.
- Using the second or third query box automatically shuts off the thesaurus and defaults to keyword searching.

Advanced Search Hints

Limits: You can limit your search by checking the boxes at the bottom of the search screen. Common limits include language, year, and type of article. You can also limit your results after running your search by clicking **Limit This Search**, found at the bottom of the page. The types of limits vary by database.

Field Qualifiers: You may choose to refine your search by specifying which field a search term is searched. For more information about the available fields, see the **Database Description** section of online help.

Search History: Your search history will automatically appear on the search menu after you have completed at least one search. Using this search menu, you can combine two or more previous searches by checking the box after the appropriate searches and clicking the **Combine** button. The search history on the search menu holds your most recent searches. To see your complete search history, click on the **View All Result Sets** link.

Questions

If you still have questions about any of these databases, please consult the online help or your library staff.