1. Analyse your question

- Identify the MAIN CONCEPTS in your topic.

2. Select database search terms

- Select your database search terms using either Subject Headings and/or Keywords.

**SUBJECT HEADING** will search for a topic discussed in an article, using the Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms.

PsycINFO’s mapping will suggest appropriate subject headings. Selected headings will retrieve articles where the subject heading has been used to index/describe an article.

Example: *Drug and Alcohol Abuse*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select Subject Heading</th>
<th>Auto Explode</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Scope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drug Abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Auto Explode** will expand the search, and search all narrower terms *ie.* Explode Drug Abuse and automatically search Alcohol abuse and drug dependency.

**Focus** will narrow the search ensuring your term is a key emphasis of the article. **Scope** gives information on the subject heading.

**KEYWORD** will search the databases title and abstract fields for your exact phrase.

Example: *Drug and Alcohol Abuse*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select Subject Heading</th>
<th>Auto Explode</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Scope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drug Abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Dependence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Drug &amp; Alcohol Abuse</em></td>
<td><strong>on</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Truncation**

Used to broaden keyword searches

- * or $ - unlimited characters at the end of a word
- *6 or $6 – 6 characters after a word
- ? – one or zero characters at the end of or within a word
- # - one variable character within a word

**ADJ#** (adjacency)

Drug adj4 program* will search for drug within 4 words of program/s.

3. Put all the pieces together logically

- Once search terms are selected, which may be a combination of subject headings and keywords, design a search strategy by combining your search concepts with **AND**, **OR**, and **NOT**.

**AND**

Both concepts/terms will be present in items retrieved by the search.

Narrows search

**OR**

Either one concept/term or the other will be present within the search results.

Expands Search

**NOT**

Used to remove a concept / term / search set.

Excludes elements

NOT is most useful when performing a number of searches on the same or similar topics. Use NOT to exclude duplicate results.
4. Limits

Adding Limits to a search, allows for search refinement of the results by age group, language, publication type, clinical queries, or the last 5 years.

There are also limits available for common groups of PsycINFO Classification Codes, which represent broad subject areas namely:

- Disordered Populations – people with a disorder eg patients
- Non-Disordered Population – family, carers, doctors, nurses, etc
- Tests and measures – how characteristics are assessed (often with an instrument listed)
- Treatments and Preventions – how to treat a problem
- Empirical Human Population – inpatient, outpatient, adult, child, etc.

5. From query to search

Query: Programs for alcohol and drug abuse in people with mental disorders.

Main concepts?

Patients: with Mental Disorders who abuse drugs or alcohol
Intervention: mental health, education and outreach programs
Comparator: No Programs
Outcomes: Control of Substance abuse, employment.

Database search

The search has been limited to disordered populations (people with a disorder e.g. patients)

6. Saving your Search

- First Register for a Personal Account via My Account
- Enter your search terms and choose to save the search Permanently, as an Auto Alert (email results update), or Create an RSS feed. Name and date the search for future reference.
- To Rerun a saved search, open the database, enter your Personal Account Name and Password and Login. Mark the appropriate saved search and RUN.
- Use the Search tab to view the search and reload the page if the search is not displayed.

7. Manage your results

- Results can be printed, emailed or Exported to EndNote.