Searcher’s Toolbox:

CREATE ACCOUNTS: MyNCBI, Ovid, EBSCO

DO PRELIMINARY SEARCHING then use “pearl growing” technique to build your strategy. It’s an iterative process. Searches strategies take time and work. They do not start like you see in the completed worksheets.

USE MULTIPLE DATABASES - Use CINAHL via Ebsco. Some journals are not indexed in Medline but ARE in CINAHL, for example: AANA Journal (American Association of Nurse Anesthetists) Use Embase via Ovid. It is much stronger in drug information and has deeper indexing. Do preliminary searches in Google Scholar!

USE SUBJECT HEADINGS and (sometimes) SUBHEADINGS
Subject Headings: use for “aboutness” and to “explode” to get narrower terms. “accidental falls”[MeSH] vs. fall asleep. “Complementary Therapies”[MeSH] automatically retrieves music, massage, aromatherapy, etc.
Subheadings: use for specificity attached to a Subject Heading: Anxiety/therapy

USE BOTH SUBJECT HEADINGS AND KEYWORDS for the most complete search
If you only use Subject Headings, you will miss the over 800,000 non-indexed articles that will not have or do not yet have Subject Headings applied. If you only use Keywords, you may get multiple unintended meanings (Contact for eyes, contact in your phone, contact dermatitis. Fall season, water fall, fall asleep, accidental fall.)
Use for buzzwords, non-indexed articles, in process articles, europoean spellings

SEARCH ONE PICO COMPONENT (CONCEPT) AT A TIME
This helps with the iterative process of searching. It also helps when there are no articles on the combined components. With this approach, you already have each component group combined with OR. Then it is easy to find articles only on one component. It is often the best that can be done to provide at least some evidence.

THINK ABOUT EACH CONCEPT – WHAT SHOULD YOU “OR”?
Terms for the same idea or group “fluid therapy” OR crystalloid* (the substance of the fluid)
Terms for a category and more specific terms within a category: “complementary Therap*” OR “alternative therap*” OR “aromatherapy”, OR music, etc.
Different spellings, gynaecology OR gynecology. anesthesia OR anaesthesia

USE BOOLEAN OPERATORS TO COMBINE TERMS OR GROUPS OF TERMS:
- AND Narrows: ALL words/concepts must be present. anesthesia AND pain
- OR Gets More: EITHER/ANY words may be present. anesthesia OR anaesthesia
- Parentheses group each concept. This is called a “nested search”: (anesthes* OR anaesthe* OR premedication* OR preanesthetic*) AND (pain OR anxiety)

Worksheets help with organizing your strategy and combining terms and groups of terms (concepts) correctly.
Note: Dana’s article “worksheet” uses columns (see page 197 of her article). Leslie’s example worksheet uses rows. Can you see they accomplish the same purpose? Dana’s pain and anxiety columns are separate (AND) but she suggests they could be combined with OR (same column). WHY? (see page 202, bottom left column).

USE TRUNCATION * when appropriate: use to retrieve various endings (caution: it can overload the system or get unintended results. diver* retrieves divert or diversion but also retrieves diverticulitis or scuba diver)

USE FILTERS AND LIMITS: some will not work on non-indexed articles (i.e., randomized controlled trials filter)

SIMILAR and CITED ARTICLES: “similar articles”/“Cited by” (PubMed). “find similar”/“find citing articles” (Ovid)

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