Introduction to PsycINFO

PsycINFO, published by the American Psychological Association (APA), is the most comprehensive international database for psychology.

Let's work through the following research question: *Is there a relationship between the media and eating disorders in males?*

**SEARCHING:**

One of the most important things to know about PsycINFO is to search your keywords **ONE AT A TIME**.

For example, first search *media*, then search *eating disorders*. Do not enter the search as "media AND eating disorders".

**Why?** PsycINFO is a sophisticated database that attempts to match, or map, your keywords to its own list of subject headings (hence the appearance of the "Map Term to Subject Heading" phrase).

![PsycINFO search interface](image)

Next, select a subject heading(s) that best matches your keyword. In this case, *Mass media*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select</th>
<th>Subject Heading</th>
<th>Auto Explode</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Scope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Audiovisual Communications Media</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Communications Media</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>Instructional Media</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<td>Printed Communications Media</td>
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<td>Telecommunications Media</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>media.mp. search as Keyword</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:**

*Auto Explode* searches for all narrower terms of your subject heading.

*Focus* limits your search to sources where your subject heading is a main focus.

*Scope* provides a brief definition for your subject heading, when available.
If you click on a subject heading, you will be directed to the **Thesaurus** for that heading. The Thesaurus illustrates any broader, narrower, or related subject headings for your term.

It may be useful to review the thesaurus to discover other related terms you may also want to search.

Once you've searched your first subject heading(s), you will be back at the initial search screen. Repeat the search process with your second keyword. In our example we would then search *eating disorders*.

### COMBINING:

Once you've searched all your terms, you will need to combine your results. You can do this by selecting the line numbers you wish to combine and the choose

### LIMITING:

*PsycINFO* allows you to limit by a variety of variables including age group, gender, publication year, publication type, language, etc.

Limiters are very useful as they help you narrow-down your results.

Choose and review the many options available.
Limit to Journal Articles: *PsycINFO* includes references to journal articles, book chapters, conference proceedings, dissertations, etc. To limit to peer-reviewed articles, choose *Peer Reviewed Journal*.

Limit to Empirical Studies: you can limit to empirical research in the *Methodology* menu. *PsycINFO* defines empirical research as a “study based on facts, systematic observation, or experiment, rather than theory or general philosophical principle”.

Limit by Gender: you can limit by gender in the *Population Groups* menu.

Limit to Age Group: allows you to narrow your research to a specific age grouping such as children, seniors, etc.

Once you have finished setting your limits, choose **Limit Search** found at the top and bottom of the screen.
SEARCH HISTORY

You can see all of your actions (searches, combining, & applied limits) in your Search History box. You will see that once you start combining your subject headings and applying your limits, your search results will be more relevant and manageable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Searches</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>exp Mass Media/</td>
<td>24301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>exp Eating Disorders/</td>
<td>19046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 and 1</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>limit 3 to (peer reviewed journal and &quot;0400 empirical study&quot; and male)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VIEWING RESULTS:

To see your results, either scroll down on the Main Search page or click DISPLAY in your Search History.

To see more information about a citation, choose the Complete Reference link. The Complete Reference provides a lot of rich information about each citation.

If the article's full-text is immediately available in PsycINFO, it will be stated as Ovid Full Text. To find additional full-text articles, choose the Find it! button. This will open a new window and will indicate if the Library has access (online and/or print) to this journal.
"Available online" - the Library has electronic access to your article - click on the GO icon to view the full-text.

"Available in the library" - the Library has a print subscription to your article - the Library location and call number will be noted.

"The U of S Library does not own this item – Request it from another library" - the Library does not have access to your article (either print or electronically). Choose GO to complete an InterLibrary request.

Once you are finished with this window, close it and use the browser’s back button to return to your results.

PRINT / EMAIL / EXPORT RESULTS:

Use the icons at the top of your results to print, email, or export your references.

It is recommended to include the Complete Reference as well as the Search History so you will have all the key information as well as the ability to replicate the search at a later date if needed.
By choosing APA for the citation style, your references will be automatically formatted into APA style. It is vital that you verify that the citations are formatted correctly according to the rules set-out in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

If you have any questions about searching in the *PsycINFO* database, please contact us!

Last updated: 16 Feb 2011 (AGerrard)