

School of Nursing, Midwifery and Postgraduate Medicine

Developing a search strategy

You have just received your first assignment and ask yourself the question ‘**Where do I start?**’ To save yourself time, you need to develop a search strategy. A **search strategy** is a methodical approach to searching for information on a topic.

Following are some suggested steps to get you started. These can be developed or modified depending on the assignment.

Getting Started – what am I looking for?

- Be sure you know what your lecturer requires - Ask questions.
- Use subject dictionaries to define terms or encyclopedias to obtain an overview of your topic. These reference sources may also provide alternative **keywords** that can be used when searching library catalogues and online journal databases.

Some useful examples of **subject specific** encyclopedias and dictionaries are:

Nursing A dictionary of nursing theory and research Australia New Zealand nursing drug handbook Common laboratory & diagnostic tests Encyclopedia and dictionary of medicine, nursing and allied health Mosby's diagnostic and laboratory test reference Mosby's dictionary of medicine, nursing and health professions Mosby's nursing drug reference Stedman's medical dictionary for the health professions and nursing	R610.7303 POW R615.10993 AUS R616.075 FIS R610.3 ENC R616.075 PAG R610.3 HAR R615.1 SKI R610.3 STE
Midwifery Bailliere's midwives' dictionary Illustrated dictionary of midwifery Melloni's illustrated dictionary of obstetrics and gynecology	R610.7303 BAI On order 618.03 MEL
Medicine Black's medical dictionary Dictionary of medical acronyms & abbreviations Encyclopedia of medical history Taber's cyclopedic medical dictionary	R610.3 BLA R610.148 DIC R610.9 MAC R610.3 TAB
Paramedical Science Mosby's paramedic textbook Oxford handbook of emergency medicine	616.025 SAN 616.025 WYA

- How much information required will depend on the requirements of the assignment or research project. For example, an assignment essay requiring 3,000 words is going to require you to collect a lot more information than one requiring only 1,000 words.

Next step - what type of material am I looking for?

There is an expectation that you will use a wide range of different resources. If an assignment is more historical or introductory, you may rely more on books. For very current information or specific topics, journal articles may be required.

Reading lists included with your **unit outline** are a useful place to begin any assignment.

Locate items using the ECU Library catalogue: it tells you which items are held by the ECU Library in **print** or **online** formats, with links to electronic holdings; and for physical items, the campus, collection and the call number. You can search by:

Keyword Author Title Subject Call number

Some catalogue search tips:

- Search the more unusual aspect of the reference first. For example, if the title is a common one e.g. Introduction to psychology, but the author has an uncommon surname, then search under author
- Always look for the main item. For example, an article is found in a journal; therefore the journal is the main item or if it is a chapter in a book, the book is the main item.
- A search can be **limited or modified** by selecting the relevant button. This allows you to modify your search by adding additional words or limit search results to specific criteria – year of publication, campus location or material type e.g. video, computer software.
- Remember that all the ECU campus libraries share their books; when you find the right book and it is at another campus, click on the **Request** button and enter the prompted details to obtain it (reserve and short term loans cannot be requested).
- This 'sharing' policy may affect you. E.g. a six week loan may shrink to one week if somebody requests a book that you have borrowed.
- Regularly check your **Library Profile** to access your borrower information and renew loans online.


Library Collections

- **Print Journals** (Serials) can be searched for in the library catalogue by selecting the **Title** option and typing in the name of the journal and using the drop down arrow next to the search box to select **journals**. The call number has an 'S' prefix. Print journals and electronic journals generally have separate catalogue records. Articles in titles held in another campus can be requested via the library catalogue using the **Request button**.
- **Electronic journals** can be searched for in the library catalogue by selecting the **Title** option and typing in the name of the journal and using the drop down arrow next to the search box to select **journals**. The title will include 'electronic source' or 'online' next to it. The link to the online is in the holdings field – check date range for holdings.
- **Electronic books.** Enter your search and use the drop down arrow to select online and click the link from the catalogue to view the book online or download for a limited time (if you are having trouble opening a PDF then save the item and try again)
- **Reference collection** (a not for loan referral collection) has an 'R' prefix.
- **Reserve collection** (high demand items for use in the library or articles accessible online). Access available via the library catalogue using unit code or lecturer's name. Online articles are accessible on or off campus

Finding journal articles

For **current** trends or information on a very specific topic, **journal** articles may be the most useful, as they are generally published on a regular basis. They can also provide information for those occasions when all the books are currently on loan.

Searching a library database provides you with a list of references on your topic, sometimes an abstract (a short summary of the article) and sometimes the full-text of the article.

When you are searching a library database check the  icon, found next to the citation, to locate a copy of the article. If available, follow the link to the full text of the article; otherwise, search the library catalogue for print holdings. The library does not hold all of the journals indexed, however, the find it option does allow you to check other local university library's holdings.

Search strategy:

- Break your topic into concepts (e.g. the importance of effective communication between the health professional and the patient.)
- List related, broader or narrower terms (e.g. **communication** = verbal, nonverbal, body language; **health professional** = nurses, midwives, paramedic etc.)
- Beware of differences between English and American spelling and terminology (foetal/ fetal, caesarean/cesarean, haemorrhage/hemorrhage)
- Use the truncation symbol, an asterisk, to search for variations of a term. (child* will find child, children, childhood)
- Combine the terms using Boolean
AND to narrow a search (communication and patient and nurses)
OR to broaden a search (nurses or midwives or paramedics)
(communication or body language or nonverbal) AND (nurses or midwives or paramedics)
- Select an appropriate database such as **CINAHL Plus** or **Medline**
- Use the terms in different databases until you have enough information.

To find a **case study**, use *CINAHL Plus*.

Enter search terms as described above and use the drop down menu next to "limit to publication" to choose "case study".

To find **CINAHL Plus**, **Medline** or any of the other library databases:

- Go to ECU Library Online <http://www.ecu.edu.au/library/> .
- Click on Journal Articles (Databases)
- Select either
 - Find databases by faculty (Computing, Health & Science)
 - Find databases by subject (Nursing, Midwifery, Medicine etc.)
 - Find databases by title (*CINAHL PLUS*, *Medline* etc.)
 - Search across several databases (MetaQuest)

Key databases

Academic OneFile Multidisciplinary database that is often useful for topics not found elsewhere

APA: FT Australian social issues, current events and healthcare system.

- CINAHL Plus** The main database for nursing and allied health literature, particularly useful for case studies
- Cochrane Library** Evidence based medicine. Clinical trials are reviewed and analysed.
- Health and Medical Complete** Health sciences
- Medline** Core medical database
- Medtext** Australian medical material

Referencing

ECU uses the APA (American Psychological Association) style of referencing as its standard. This is described in detail in *The publication manual of the APA* (Shelf number: 808.06615 PUB) and there is a condensed version that can be purchased from the ECU Bookshop or accessed online via ECU Online <http://www.ecu.edu.au/LDS/pdf/refguide.pdf>
 The *APA style guide to electronic references* is accessible via the ECU library catalogue <http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html>

Example 1: Book Reference

Malloch, K. & Porter-O'Grady, T. (Eds.). (2006). *Introduction to evidence-based practice in nursing and health care*. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett

The diagram shows the following callouts pointing to parts of the reference:

- Authors/Editors: Malloch, K. & Porter-O'Grady, T. (Eds.)
- Date: (2006)
- Title: *Introduction to evidence-based practice in nursing and health care*
- Place of publication: Sudbury, MA
- Publisher: Jones and Bartlett

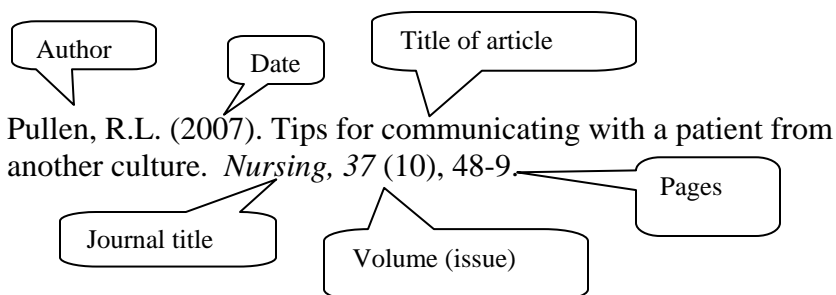
Example 2: Book chapter

Kilner, T. (2008). Major incidents. In B. Dolan & L. Holt (Eds.), *Accident and emergency: Theory into practice*, (2nd ed., pp. 37-43). Edinburgh: Elsevier.

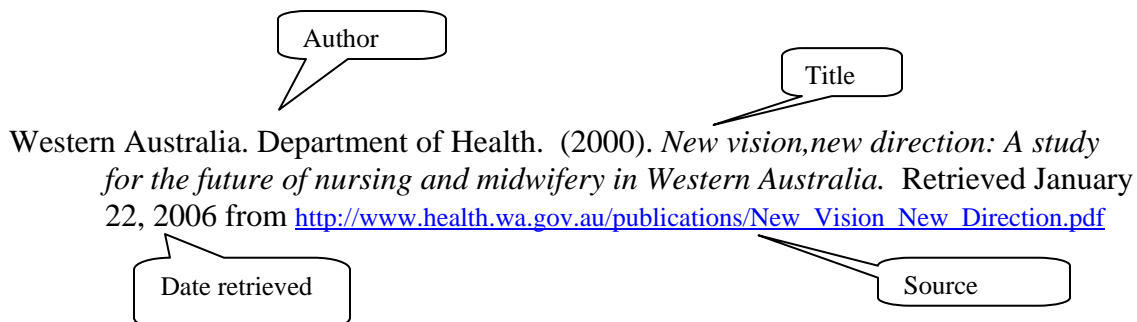
The diagram shows the following callouts pointing to parts of the reference:

- Author of chapter: Kilner, T.
- Title of chapter: Major incidents
- Editors: B. Dolan & L. Holt (Eds.)
- Edition and pages: (2nd ed., pp. 37-43)
- Title of the book: *Accident and emergency: Theory into practice*

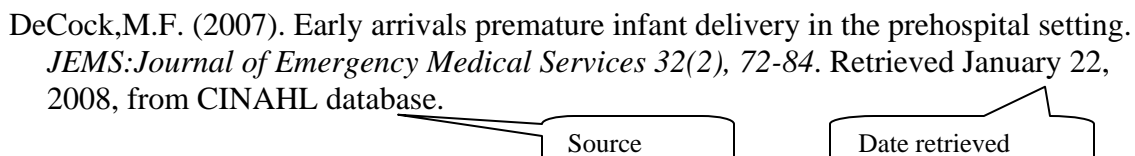
Example 3: Journal article



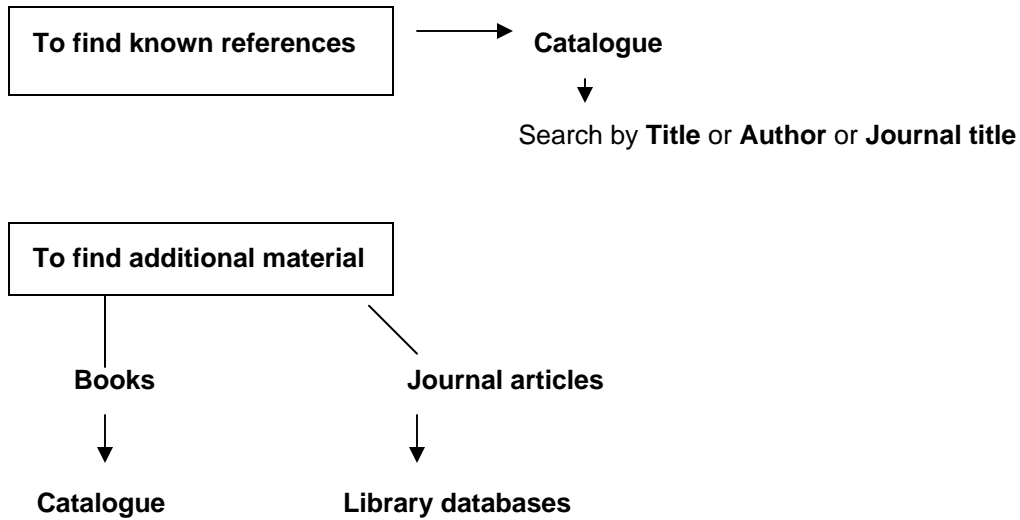
Example 4: Internet site



Example 5: Article from an electronic subject index (database)



Summary



To find out more

- Attend session on database searching. See Library for session times.
- Go on a **Library Orientation Tour**. See Library for tour times.
- Check out **Liberty: Learning to find information**. Self paced learning modules.
- <Click> **Getting started at the library**. Available at ECU Library Online
- Buy or download the **ECU Referencing Guide**. Available from the ECU Bookshop and ECU Library Online.

For assistance

- Go to **Library Information Desk**, speak to reference librarian

Access to other libraries:

- Edith Cowan University has negotiated agreements with the libraries of the other WA Universities for you to be able to register as a borrower for the duration of the academic year by presenting to the chosen library, your Student ID card and proof of enrolment (first time only). The ECU library catalogue provides an option to Search other Library Catalogues.

Research Planner – Developing a Search Strategy

Developing a Search Strategy

1. Analyse your topic –

What have I been asked to do?

- Know what you are looking for
- If you were to find the perfect article, what information would it contain?
- Define unknown terms

What types of material do I need?

- Current – Journal articles may be the most useful
- Consult encyclopedias or books for background information
- Statistics
- Websites – Useful for government or institutional information

What level of information is required?

- You may be asked to use 'scholarly' information and need to limit searches to refereed or peer reviewed journals
- You may be asked to provide research evidence or news articles

How much information is required?

- A major assignment worth more marks and requiring more words often requires more supporting information
- Has the assignment noted a requirement i.e. Find 5 journal articles

2. Find information using one of the following sources-

- ECU Library catalogue – to check for ECU Library holdings of all types of materials including books, videos, DVDs, journals and electronic materials
- Subject databases – to locate journal articles on a topic
- Internet – remember to check credibility of the author/website

3. Check out the information collected

- Is the information credible and relevant to the topic?
- Have I got enough relevant information?
- Does the information cover all the elements of the question?

4. Produce the report/Write the essay

- Presentation – use an appropriate format
- Credit your sources of information - remember do not plagiarise
- Referencing – Use the ECU Referencing guide