Cochrane Library

The Cochrane Library consists of 7 individual databases, the most useful being: The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (Cochrane Reviews), which consists of systematic reviews plus protocols for Cochrane reviews and editorials, the Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects (DARE) and the Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL).

Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews
This database contains independent reports of clinical trials and similar studies, which have been selected, reviewed and compared in order to provide an unbiased overview of the effects of treatments and interventions.

Searching this database is different from searching CINAHL or Medline etc. as:

- The research methods and results have already been evaluated
- You will probably find only a few, if any, results for your search, as just one result may be reviewing many tens of research articles
- Each review is regularly updated, so you should check for the most recent update.

Access

- Go to the LSBU home page and then click on the link Student portal at the top of the page.
- Log in with your LSBU username and password.
- You are now on My LSBU.
- Go to the Library & Academic tab and then click on the Library link in the drop-down menu.
- Select the E-Resources tab from the middle of the page, and type the name of the database you want to use, in this instance, Cochrane Library, into the search box.
- Click on the link to the database next to Click here to access this e-resource

Please note: these databases can also be found under Health and Social Care resources, which you see when you click on the link Subject Resources on the left hand side. The Health and Social Care resources section contains a list of other electronic resources that might be useful for your subject.
You are now on the Cochrane Library homepage. From here, you can:

- read the highlighted reviews
- go to the editorials
- access special collections
- browse by topic
- perform a basic search
- click through to the Advanced Search screen. The Advanced Search option allows you to create a more sophisticated search, and provides a number of filters for refining your search results.

Please note: If you are looking for systematic reviews, it is often best to start with a broad search as there may be a short enough result list to browse through.
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Advanced Search

- Clicking on the + sign next to the search limits box will allow you to add extra rows (maximum five) for your keywords.
- You can use the dropdown menu to restrict your search as appropriate for example, **Title, Abstract, Keywords** (most commonly used), **Author**, and so on. Access the menu by clicking on the arrow. Click **Go** to search.

You can improve your search strategy by using a variety of techniques made available through the Advanced Search option. These techniques will help you to get results that are more focused and relevant to your research topic or question.

**Combine keywords using AND, for example, children AND obesity**
- This will find articles that contain both words.

**Combine keywords using OR, for example, obese OR overweight**
- This is used to combine related / similar terms or spelling variations. It will help to broaden your search (that is, retrieve more results) and ensure that you don’t miss any relevant results.
Combine keywords using NOT, for example, public sector NOT education

- This will dismiss articles with the word education in it so your results will be more relevant.

**Improve your search**

**Truncation** *

- You can avoid missing relevant articles by truncating words that have multiple endings. For example, `smok*` will search for `smoke`, `smoker`, `smokers`, `smoked` and `smoking`. This is a good way of increasing the number of results you retrieve.
- Please note: Truncation symbols may vary between databases but Cochrane uses the asterisk (*).

**Phrase searching**

- You can search for phrases by putting speech marks around the words, for example, “mental illness” or “breast cancer”. This will help you to get a more precise search.
- Please note: You should use phrase searching with caution (that is, only with terms that commonly appear together); otherwise you may risk eliminating relevant results.

**Spelling variations and plurals**

- The Cochrane Library will search for words with small spelling variations. For example, the term `tumour` will also match `tumor`. Similarly, pluralised versions of words will match singular versions. That is, the word `drug` will search for both `drug` and `drugs`. 
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More search tips

• Click on Search Help for more details about how to modify your search.

• Once you have performed your search, you can create / log in to your Cochrane account to save your search for future reference. Click on save on the Search page.

• Saving a search also allows you to activate an alert so that you receive an email whenever new articles matching your search criteria have been published in the Cochrane Library. To set an alert, go to Saved Searches, find the search for which you wish to create an alert and click the box marked Alerts. You can de-activate an alert by clicking on the box again and removing the □.
The Medical Subject Heading (MeSH) search is based on the National Library of Medicine’s thesaurus of medical subject headings. MeSH can be a useful search tool if you don’t know the most appropriate term to use, if you want to make sure your search covers all similar or related terms, or if your initial search has returned 0 results and you want to see if the database is describing the term in a different way.

- Click on the Medical Terms (MeSH) link at the top of the Advanced Search page.

- Enter a single search term in the search box (you can combine your searches later), and click Lookup. If the term is not classified as a MeSH term, you will not see a MeSH tree or any results. If this happens, check whether you have an Exact term match or Phrase Matches instead. These are located on the left hand side of the screen. Choose a term or heading that is the most suitable amongst them and search for one of these.
If you want to break down your topic into more specialised areas, you can use a MESH qualifier from the drop-down menu that comes up if you click into the search box next to the box that contains your search term. You can also choose a more specific heading, i.e. a subheading. Subheadings are underneath the subject heading and are indented on the page to further stress the hierarchical relationships.

On this page you will see a definition of the term, a thesaurus showing synonyms and a hierarchical outline of where the term falls in medical subject headings under various topics (see the MeSH trees in the middle of the page).

Browse through the available trees and choose those that are relevant by checking or unchecking the box. For a comprehensive search, select the option to Explode all trees.

If you have finished your search, click View Results.

If your enquiry is more complex (for example, you want to add other terms to your search), click Add to Search Manager and perform your additional MeSH searches in the same way.
Once all your searches are complete, go to the **Search Manager** tab where you will be able to view or combine your searches.

Combine your searches by adding the relevant numbers of your searches to the next search box, (for example, **#1 and #2**), and click **Go**.

The number of results retrieved from your combined search will appear in the box to the right of the row. To view the results, click on the box, and then scroll down the page to view the articles (Please note: the database displays results from the Cochrane Reviews database by default. To find out how to view results from other databases, please see the Results section below).

### Results

The search is automatically run over all the databases in the Cochrane Library, but only those from the Cochrane Reviews will be displayed on the screen. Click on the links to view articles from other databases.
Please note: while Cochrane Reviews and Protocols are available full-text from the Cochrane Library, some databases will not provide the full-text of an article. In such cases, you may be able to find the full text in another one of LSBU’s subscription databases. You can do this by taking a note of the journal title you are interested in and searching for it under the Journals tab of the library catalogue on the Library homepage.

Alternatively, you can search for the article title directly on Summon.

Results are automatically sorted by relevance in the Cochrane Library, but you can choose to sort them alphabetically or by date if you prefer.

Click on the title of the article to see the full record.
The HTML full text of the article opens when you click on the title of the article. If you right-click anywhere on the page, a menu opens that lets you save or print the document.

The PDF version of the article is available when you click on the icon on the left hand side on the HTML page of the article. You can then save or print a copy by hovering over the bottom of the page and clicking on the respective icon.

You can also view different parts of the document by clicking on icons on the left of the HTML article.

**Beware!** Some reviews can be very long. Look at the number of pages before hitting the print button! You may wish to save and edit before printing.
Further help

The Cochrane Library offers a comprehensive **Help** function, but if you require further assistance, please contact the Information Skills Adviser for HSC: llrhsc@lsbu.ac.uk