



# Doing a review: Introduction to types of reviews & searching for literature

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PsySTIP day, 27. September 2024

Kjersti Aksnes-Hopland,  
The University Library



# What is a review?

- and what does it mean "to review the literature"?

- **To** review: look closely at, with the intent to say something about.
- **A** review: a text looking closely at a defined number of other texts.
- Various types of reviews: differ with respect to
  - scope (how wide range of and high number of articles)
  - aim/intention (what kind of results or conclusions does the review intend to deliver)

## Examples of definitions:

- **Systematic review:**

‘Seeks to systematically search for, appraise and synthesis research evidence, often adhering to guidelines on the conduct of a review’ (Grant & Booth, 2009)

- **Scoping review:**

‘Preliminary assessment of potential size and scope of available research literature. Aims to identify nature and extent of research evidence (usually including ongoing research)’ (Grant & Booth, 2009)

- **Narrative review:**

‘Used to describe a ‘conventional’ review of the literature, particularly when contrasted with a systematic review’ (Grant & Booth, 2009)

Grant, M. J., & Booth, A. (2009). A typology of reviews: An analysis of 14 review types and associated methodologies. *Health Information & Libraries Journal*, **26**, 91– 108. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-1842.2009.00848.x>

Sutton, A., Clowes, M., Preston, L. and Booth, A. (2019), Meeting the review family: exploring review types and associated information retrieval requirements. *Health Information and Libraries Journal*, **36**(3), 202-222. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hir.12276>

Whatever kind of review -

- there is the central question of ***selection of articles***:
  - ***how*** are they found
  - ***why*** are they included

# Systematic searching – WHY

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- Avoid the feeling of confusion and messiness and unnecessary repetition – gain a sense of overview and control.
- Be able to account for how the literature you are using has been found.
- Ensure a transparency when it comes to (unavoidable) bias and limitations.
- Meet the requirements of research methods when the literature search is the method for data collection.

# Systematic searching - WHERE

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- At the core of most systematic searches:

Specialized databases indexing large numbers of articles from a defined "universe" of journals. (Ex: WoS, PsycINFO, Medline, ERIC)

*Index databases can be delivered on several platforms, - include this information!*

- Any databases can be used as an addition, as long as searches can be replicated.
- Search engines are not very suitable for systematic searching, but sometimes still included (Google Scholar).

# Additional searches /supplementary searches

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- In addition to "the core", the results from ***the systematic searches***, several valuable supplementary search methods are available
- Cited articles and citing articles
- Searching Google Scholar and other search engines
- "Hand searching" thematically relevant journals
- Contacting authors directly
- Using AI tools for suggested similar articles  
(ex: Keenious, Research Rabbit, Elicit, Connected Papers)

# Systematic seaching – what are the elements?

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## **PLAN**

- Where: - the sources
- How: the search strategy, i.e. search terms in specified logical combinations and possible limitations applied

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

- How: adjustment of strategy in given sources, including spesific information about search field definition and other adjustable variables
- When: last date of search / new data included.



# The importance of detailed documentation

## **PLAN**

**Where:** - the sources

**How:** the search strategy, i.e. search terms in specified logical combinations and possible limitations applied

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

**How:** adjustment of strategy in given sources, including specific information about search field definition and other adjustable variables

**When:** last date of search / new data included.

[PRISMA main page](#) (key documents, extensions and flow charts)

[PRISMA for Searching](#) (extension for search documentation)

# Some final points

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- Systematic searching is necessary but not sufficient to make the review a Systematic Review
- A systematic search does not necessarily have to be a comprehensive search.
- A systematic search is not necessarily a good, high quality search,
  - but it is documentable, and transparent!

This is a quality in itself, and a requirement for research methodology

- Systematic searching is a **research method** when the data we need are scientific publications
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# Some resources for systematic searching and Systematic Reviews

- [Phd on Track, section Review and write](#) A collaboration with UiB, NTNU and more.
- [Campbell Collaboration & Open Learning Initiative](#) (complete free course)
- [Cochrane Interactive Learning](#) (a free first module)

Norwegian only:

- [Slik oppsummerer vi forskning, Metodeboka](#) (the section "Fremgangsmåte") Folkehelseinstituttet
- [Slik oppsummerer vi forskning \(pdf\)](#) Folkehelseinstituttet.