Review Families as Identified in Sutton et al. (2019).

Sutton A, Clowes M, Preston L, Booth A. Meeting the review family: exploring review types and associated information retrieval requirements. Health Info Libr J. 2019 Sep;36(3):202-222. doi: 10.1111/hir.12276. PMID: 31541534.

Review Type	Summary of Search Approach	Type of Literature Required	Evidence Identification	Available Guidance on Searching	Type of Guidance
Traditional Reviews Family					
Critical Review	To identify theory and empirical research until saturation is reached	Theory and/or empirical research	*Expected:* Use several sources to reduce risk of bias. Usually focuses on database searching *Discretionary:* Hand search recommended & reference-list checking (backward chaining)	Limited recent guidance, focus tends to be on analysis, literature searching knowledge is assumed	Current Practice
Integrative Review Also known as: *Integrative Synthesis*	Focused, but capturing a diverse range of literature to represent the topic	Evidence can come from randomised controlled trials, observational studies, qualitative research	*Expected:* All eligible primary sources should be considered. Research registries *Discretionary:* Reference list checking (backward chaining), journal hand searching, contact with experts	None specific, but searching covered in detail by Whittemore & Knafl (2005)	Methodological Advice
Narrative Review	Aims to identify information to present a topic comprehensively, including existing theories and models	Original articles including randomised controlled trials & observational studies (quantitative and qualitative). Editorials by key opinion leaders may also be included	*Expected:* Structured approach using a variety of sources. Tends to focus on database searching. *Discretionary:* Reference-list checking (backward chaining) until saturation is reached. Sources and search strategy traditionally not specified but clearer reporting is increasingly being adopted.	None specific but searching covered in limited detail in Gasparyan et al (2011)	Methodological Advice

Narrative Summary	Targeted searches to identify highest-quality evidence available	Priority given to relevant high-quality systematic reviews but all literature is considered	*Expected:* Sources limited but search sources and strategies should be explicit *Discretionary:* Grey literature	None specific but searching covered in limited detail in Khanghura, Konnyu, Cushman, Grimshaw and Moher (2012)	Methodological Advice and Current Practice
State of the Art Review	Similar to a scoping exercise, aim of search is to identify most current literature	All types of literature provided it is current	*Expected:* General and at least one speciality database as appropriate Grey Literature repositories *Discretionary:* Reference list checking (backward chaining)	None, suggest looking at recent reviews of this type conducted systematically for guidance	Current Practice
Systematic Reviews Family					
Cochrane Review of Effects	Searches should aim to be highly sensitive	Randomized trials, including unpublished and ongoing studies. May also include other study designs to address specific eligibility criteria such as adverse effects, economic issues, qualitative research questions.	*Expected:* CENTRAL, MEDLINE, EMBASE (if access available). Specialized Registers of relevant Cochrane Review Groups. Trial registers and repositories of results via clincaltrials.gov, ICTRP and other sources as appropriate . Attempt to identify unpublished studies (including contacting relevant individuals and organisations). Identify ongoing trials and keep track of these for possible later inclusion. Citation searching is an important adjunct to database searching. Reference list checking of relevant reviews and included studies. *Discretionary:* Regulatory agencies and clinical study reports increasingly important sources. National, regional, and subject-specific databases according to topic of review. Conference abstracts, grey literature. Handsearching journals and/or conference proceedings.	Chapter 6 of Cochrane Handbook, Searching for Studies (Lefebvre et al 2011) & Chapter 4: Searching for and selecting studies (Draft version) (Lefebvre at al 2019)	Official Guidance

Comparative Effectiveness Review	To be comprehensive, using multiple databases and supplementary methods. Any limits applied must be reported	Primary studies ideally with head-to-head comparisons. Grey literature including unpublished data	*Expected:* More than one database including MEDLINE and Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials. Grey literature such as clinical trial protocols and regulatory information. *Discretionary:* Citation searching (forwards and backwards), hand search of targeted journals, correspondence with authors, contact with industry for unpublished data	Methods Guide for Comparative Effectiveness Reviews (Relevo & Balshem, 2011)	Official Guidance
Diagnostic Systematic Review Also known as: *Diagnostic Test Accuracy Review*	As with systematic review, the aim is to be comprehensive but limited sources and methods may improve efficiency (Preston et al 2015)	Typically cross-sectional	*Expected:* MEDLINE, EMBASE, Cochrane Register of Diagnostic Test Accuracy Studies as a minimum Searching for other related diagnostic reviews to check for relevant search terms via sources such as MEDION, C-EBLM, ARIF, HTA, DARE *Discretionary:* Reference list checking (backward chaining), citation searching (forward chaining), use of "related articles" function in databases, set up citation alerts in relevant electronic journals	*Cochrane Chapter 7 searching for studies DTA handbook* (de Vet et al 2008)	Official Guidance
Meta-analysis	Exhaustive, using a wide range of sources and methods. Methods should be explicit and reported according to PRISMA guidance (Moher et al 2009)	Quantitative data from randomised controlled trials for example	*Expected:* Formal search protocol of multiple databases with detailed search strategy as an appendix. As per protocol *Discretionary:* Handsearching; Follow up of references (backward chaining); Internet searching	Chapter 6 of Cochrane Handbook, Searching for Studies (Lefebvre et al 2011)	Official Guidance
Network Meta-Analysis	Thorough and reproducible, applying the rigorous conduct of a "standard" systematic review	Direct and indirect evidence. Where head-to-head trials of interventions and comparators do not exist, studies with indirect comparisons are sought.	*Expected: Adopt a* breadth-first strategy (Hawkins et al 2009) until no further comparators are identified. Also search for existing meta-analyses of direct or indirect comparisons (to empirically validate the analysis).	Hoaglin et al (2011) Dequen et al (2014)	Official Guidance Methodological Advice

			Discretionary: Handsearching; Follow up of references (backward chaining); Internet searching		
Prognostic Review	A structured systematic search using a validated filter to identify prognostic and prediction studies. A prognostic review may either ask an open question (what factors may be used to predict outcome?) or may focus on evaluating the usefulness of specific markers for predicting disease progression.	Prognostic studies examining the likely course of disease progression and candidate factors (e.g. biomarkers or differential health behaviours) which may be used to predict disease progression and target treatment accordingly.	*Expected:* Structured, comprehensive database searches around the disease area, combined with an agreed list of potential markers and/or a validated prognostic filter Note that sensitivity and specificity are generally lower for prognostic filters than for other study types (Chatterley and Dennett 2012) therefore if the focus is on specific pre-determined markers, these may also be searched without further application of the filter. *Discretionary:* Depending on the review team's prior knowledge of the topic, a broad scoping search may be helpful (using terms for the disease area combined with a validated prognostic filter) to identify potential candidate markers.	Utilisation of search filters in systematic reviews of prognosis questions. (Chatterley and Dennett, 2012) Search filters for finding prognostic and diagnostic prediction studies in Medline to enhance systematic reviews. (Geersing et al 2012)	Methodological Advice
Psychometric Review	A structured search adopting a systematic approach	Literature evaluating the properties of health measurement instruments	*Expected:* Database (subject-specific and general) searching, consider using the validated search filter (Terwee et al 2009). Citation searching (backward and forward) and reference list checking. *Discretionary:* Grey literature, for example unpublished, theses and conference proceedings.	Guideline for Systematic Reviews of Outcome Measurement Instruments (COSMIN n.d.)	Official Guidance
Review of Economic Evaluations	Comprehensive searching to systematic review standards	Economic evaluations	*Expected:* Specialist databases e.g. NHS EED (archive only, not updated after 31st March 2015) and general databases (e.g. MEDLINE & EMBASE)	SURE (Summarized Research in Information Retrieval for HTA) Info Costs and economic	Official Guidance

			Websites of Health Technology Assessment agencies, ScHARRHUD (health utilities database), HERC (Health Economics Research Centre) database *Discretionary:* Reference list checking (backward chaining) most commonly used supplementary search technique. Also expert contact, conference abstracts, journals hand searching.	evaluation (Kaunelis & Glanville 2017)	
Systematic Review	Exhaustive, using wide range of sources and methods. Methods should be explicit and reported according to PRISMA guidance (Moher et al 2009)	Typically, research studies but can be used for any publication type	*Expected:* Formal search protocol of multiple databases with detailed search strategy as an appendix. Specialist databases and library collections as per protocol *Discretionary:* Hand searching; Follow up of references (backward chaining); Internet searching	Searching for Studies: A Guide to Information Retrieval for Campbell (Kugley et al 2016) Chapter 3: Standards for Finding and Assessing Individual Studies in Morton et al (2011)	Official Guidance Official Guidance
Systematic Review of Epidemiology Studies Also known as: *Prevalence and/or Incidence Review* *Etiology and/or Risk Review*	Exhaustive, using a wide range of sources and methods. Methods should be explicit and reported according to PRISMA guidance (Moher et al 2009)	Observational studies (case-control, cross-sectional, longitudinal, cohort)	*Expected:* MEDLINE & EMBASE preferred primary sources. *Discretionary:* Conference abstracts, PhD dissertations, and other grey literature as appropriate. Citation searching (forward chaining), contacting authors (including for unpublished studies).	Searching covered in detail in Denison et al (2013)	Methodological Advice
Review of Reviews Family					
Review of Reviews Also known as: *Overview*	Uses systematic review search methods, but it may be possible to apply limits	Systematic Reviews	*Expected:* Search databases using systematic reviews filter or consider searching databases specific to systematic reviews (e.g. CDSR, DARE). Report methods and search strategy. Some overviews	Wright & Walwyn (2016) conference presentation. Searching covered in detail in Pollock et al	Methodological Advice & Current Practice

			search for any recent primary studies published since the review. Consider searching PROSPERO for prospective reviews *Discretionary:* Manual search of key journals, reference list checking of included reviews (backward chaining), contact with experts, citation searching of individual studies (forward chaining)	(2017), Smith et al (2011).	
Umbrella Review	Following the same standards as systematic review searches, to be comprehensive, transparent, reproducible. Limits may be applied where appropriate	Systematic reviews, evidence syntheses, randomised controlled trials, other study designs as appropriate	*Expected:* Databases of systematic reviews as a starting point. Use established search filters to search broader databases if appropriate. *Discretionary:* At least two or three relevant sources for grey literature. Reference list checking (backward chaining).	Book chapter on searching evidence in Umbrella Reviews textbook (Golder & Wright 2016)	Methodological Advice
Rapid Reviews Family					
Rapid Review (general guidance for all types. Specific types below) Also known as: *Rapid Evidence Synthesis*	Methods depend on type of rapid review and must be negotiated explicitly with client at outset. Depending upon the methodology agreed, search process may range from a full, exhaustive search (as for a systematic review) to a much simpler exercise. Any such limitations must be made explicit. Note that "rapid review" should be used only as Generic Term: prefer a Specific Term below.			Expediting systematic reviews: methods and implications of rapid reviews (Ganann et al 2010) *Rapid review guidebook* (Dobbins, NCCMT, 2017)	Methodological advice

Rapid Evidence Assessment	Question-led, typically focussing on a clearly-specified intervention and setting with explicit inclusion criteria.	Reviews and primary studies (quantitative/ qualitative / both); grey literature and statistics according to client needs.	*Expected:* Broad range of sources, though search strings may be less developed than for an exhaustive search and readily available resources may be prioritised for expediency. *Discretionary:* Hand searching of key journals may be used if time permits. Also conference proceedings and research funders' websites, statistical sources and datasets, according to client's needs.	The Rapid Evidence Assessment Toolkit (UK Civil Service 2014)	Official guidance
Rapid Realist Synthesis Also known as: *Rapid Realist Review*	Aim is "evidence saturation" rather than exhaustive coverage of the topic. Typically comprises a search to identify theories and a separate search for empirical evidence, often conducted in parallel.	Theoretical, quantitative and qualitative evidence.	*Expected:* Focussed searches to formulate theories, validated against known studies provided by expert stakeholders. These should be complemented by purposive searches for empirical evidence as emerging theories are tested and refined. *Discretionary:* Cluster searching for sibling/kinship studies to add context.	A time-responsive tool for informing policy making: rapid realist review. (Saul et al 2013) See also: Working with a librarian on a realist review: The RAMESES Project (Duncan et al 2017)	Methodological Advice & Current Practice
Qualitative Reviews Family (Also known as: Experiential Reviews)					
Qualitative Evidence Synthesis	Where comprehensive follows standards and expectations of conventional systematic review.	Research studies using formally recognised qualitative methods of data collection and data analysis.	*Expected:* Formal search strategy of multiple databases (following protocol).	Cochrane Qualitative and Implementation Methods Group Guidance series - paper 6: Methods for question formulation,	Official Guidance & Methodological Advice

Also known as: Qualitative Systematic Review	Alternatively, may use a purposive approach structured around pre-identified areas of variation (e.g. male/female; disease severity; patients/carers etc) with databases selected for diversity of coverage.	May include theses or book chapters.	*Discretionary:* Reference list and citation searching; searches for theses in repositories.	searching and protocol development for qualitative evidence synthesis (Harris et al 2017) Searching for qualitative research for inclusion in systematic reviews: a structured methodological review. (Booth, 2016)	
Qualitative Meta-Synthesis	Generally aims to be comprehensive to create confidence in other researchers working in the field. Some guidance implies that search alternatives may be possible if not impairing retrieval.	Research studies using formally recognised qualitative methods of data collection and data analysis. Includes unpublished work including theses, dissertations and conference proceedings.	*Expected:* Systematic, iterative searches; exhaustive searching of multiple electronic databases. *Discretionary:* Forward and backward citation searching of included reports. "Berry picking" and cluster techniques. Hand searching of key journals.	The challenges of searching for and retrieving qualitative studies. (Barroso et al 2003)	Methodological Advice
Qualitative Research Synthesis	Aims for comprehensive rather than exhaustive coverage - searching continues until "saturation" is reached.	Method restricts studies to the same type of qualitative research	*Expected:* Searching of subject databases and grey literature *Discretionary:* Hand searching; reference /citation searching	Chapter 3 Designing the synthesis. In: Major, C. H., & Savin-Baden, M. (2010). *An introduction to qualitative research synthesis: Managing*	Methodological Advice.

				the information explosion in social science research. Routledge. Purposeful sampling in qualitative research synthesis. (Suri 2011).	
Qualitative Evidence Synthesis (QES) **Also known as:** *Qualitative Interpretive Meta-synthesis* *Qualitative Meta-synthesis* *Qualitative Research Synthesis* *Qualitative Meta-Summary*	Comprehensive search, typically coterminous with an accompanying Cochrane Intervention review. However, may expand to cover experience of a disease /condition if qualitative intervention studies are lacking in number or richness.	Qualitative research studies (using recognised qualitative methods of data collection and of data analysis).	*Expected:* Comprehensive searches of MEDLINE, CINAHL and EMBASE plus topic specific databases and library catalogues. Use of qualitative methodological filters. Reference list checking and citation searching. Use of "related articles" features. *Discretionary:* Hand searching. Identifying theses and dissertations. Internet searching.	Cochrane Qualitative and Implementation Methods Group Guidance series - paper 6: Methods for question formulation, searching and protocol development for qualitative evidence synthesis (Harris et al 2017) Searching for qualitative research for inclusion in systematic reviews: a structured methodological review. (Booth et al 2016)	Methodological Advice

Best Fit Framework Synthesis	Comprehensive parallel searches of theoretical frameworks and for qualitative research studies. Searching for theory may be required to identify suitable framework.	Typically qualitative research studies but also suggested for integrating quantitative and qualitative studies.	*Expected:* Comprehensive search of multiple databases (and grey literature sources) for primary studies according to pre-defined criteria and using qualitative methodological filters. *Discretionary:* Follow up of reference lists and citations.	Formal guidance on QES (see above) Methodological advice: "Best fit" framework synthesis: refining the method. (Carroll et al 2013) Identification of frameworks: Systematic searching for theory to inform systematic reviews: is it feasible? Is it desirable? (Booth & Carroll 2015)	Methodological Advice
Framework Synthesis	Comprehensive search for primary studies based on predefined criteria. Searches of multiple databases using qualitative methodological filters. May involve iterative searching in both identifying and populating a framework.	Typically qualitative research studies but also suggested for integrating quantitative and qualitative studies	*Expected:* Comprehensive search of multiple databases (and grey literature sources) for primary studies according to pre-defined criteria and using qualitative methodological filters. *Discretionary:* Follow up of reference lists and citations.	No specific guidance. See guidance on QES above.	-

Meta-Aggregation	Comprehensive search for primary studies based on predefined criteria. Searches of multiple databases using relevant search terms. Where possible, use methodological filter on qualitative research designs, adapted or modified for each database to save time in separating quantitative from qualitative studies. For pragmatic reasons, studies reporting in languages other than those mastered by the review team are not considered.	Qualitative research studies of any type	*Expected:* Three stages: Phase one: reviewer uses a pool of known relevant articles to create a logic grid featuring keywords from (i) titles and abstracts; and (ii) searchable index terms used to describe them in included databases to build a comprehensive search strategy optimised for each source. Phase two: searches for each database included in the protocol. Phase three: review of reference lists of all retrieved studies *Discretionary:* Online sources of gray or unpublished literature to be considered. Hand searching of key journal(s). Reference list checking and forward citation searching of included studies.	*Joanna Briggs Institute Reviewer's Manual.* The Joanna Briggs Institute, 2017. Chapter 2 (Lockwood et al 2017)	Official Guidance
Meta-Ethnography	Not comprehensive or exhaustive; seeks saturation –	Conceptually rich and contextually thick qualitative research studies.	*Expected:* Simpler search strategies to retrieve key papers across a range of databases (MEDLINE, EMBASE,	Chapter 3 - Literature searching. In: *Evaluating meta-ethnography:*	Methodological Advice

Also known as: *Extended Meta-Ethnography* *Meta-Ethnography Review*	theoretical sampling. "Safety net" approach combining database searching with extensive supplementary searching (e.g. hand-searching - including purposive inspection of books within a predefined classmark - and consultation with experts, depending on topic area).	Includes books. Recent theses may also be used (or omitted to keep synthesis manageable).	CINAHL, Web of Science); indexing terms to describe qualitative study design vary. Hand searching of key journals and expert advice on "classic texts". *Discretionary:* Use of current awareness alerting services. Hand searching of books within a predefined classmark. Thesis searching.	*systematic analysis and synthesis of qualitative research.* (Campbell et al, 2011).	
Meta-Interpretation	Literature is searched until theoretical saturation (i.e. saturation of concepts, not literature) is reached. Search process requires a series of iterations. Exclusion criteria developed as the meta-interpretation proceeds.	Qualitative research studies, especially rich in context. Maximum variation is desirable in order to achieve theoretical saturation.	*Expected:* Search a wide range of databases with keywords informed by experts. *Discretionary:* Citation pearl growing to trace relevant studies (identifying keywords and descriptors in citations to be incorporated into subsequent searches.)	A research synthesis and taxonomic classification of the organizational stressors encountered by sport performers. (Arnold et al 2012)	Current Practice
Meta-Narrative Review	Seeks to identify and combine different research	Aims to identify potential seminal sources within each discipline (conceptual, theoretical or	*Expected:* No preferred study types established a priori, but methodological filters may be used when designated a quality feature by scientists	RAMESES Meta-Narrative Standards	Official Guidance

	traditions. Different search strategies required for different literatures. Searching guided by objectives and focus of review, and revised iteratively as data emerges. Process for additional searches should be clearly documented. Single pre-defined search unlikely to be sufficient and may suggest insufficient reflection on emerging findings.	empirical studies, which have defined tradition and inspired later work) identified from judicious searching of reference lists of later studies.	within that tradition. Search for empirical papers by hand searching key journals, and snowballing. "Snowballing" (emerges as study unfolds) Tracking from reference lists of all full text papers. Use judgement to decide whether to pursue these further. *Discretionary:* Searches <u>may</u> start with review-level evidence. Personal knowledge and resources, personal contacts /academic networks and serendipitous discovery	(Greenhalgh, Wong et al 2013-2018)	
Meta-Study **Also known as:** *Meta-Theory*	Aim is to sample from the total available population of studies. Search aims to reveal patterns across studies so a diverse sample is sought but this must be representative to allow	Qualitative studies and mixed methods with a qualitative component. Approach looks to characterise against study characteristics, methods. cross-cutting themes and any top-level patterns.	*Expected:* Systematic searches in a wide range of electronic databases, typically across a wide time interval. Typically, no language restrictions. Use of qualitative filters. *Discretionary:* Secondary search of grey literature from specialist websites. Reference lists of included studies. Contact with experts and through team networks.	The retrieval and assessment of primary research. In:. *Methods in Nursing Research: Meta-study of qualitative health research* (Paterson et al 2001).	Methodological Advice.

	observations on shared trends and characteristics.				
Meta-Summary	Comprehensive search required as metasummary seeks to summarise frequencies of themes.	Topical and thematic survey findings, typically produced from qualitative descriptive studies. Qualitative and mixed methods studies included.	*Expected:* Multiple subject databases as per systematic review. Strategy developed by librarian experienced in systematic review searching. Iterative approach with research team providing feedback on initial search strategy, and amendments made to optimize search results. MEDLINE search adapted for other databases. Qualitative filters used. *Discretionary:* Dissertations and Theses databases. Automated alerts set up for new studies. Contact made with authors for studies in progress.	The challenges of searching for and retrieving qualitative studies (Barroso et al 2003).	
Thematic Synthesis Also known as: *Thematic Analysis*	Aim for 'conceptual saturation' when planning a search strategy. Purposive sampling based on primary qualitative research methods may also be 'borrowed' e.g. deliberately seeking negative	Qualitative research studies	*Expected:* Comprehensive database searches as per systematic review. Not possible to rely on electronic databases. Need to search extensively in 'grey' literature, ask authors of relevant papers if they know of more studies, and look especially for book chapters. *Discretionary:* Screening titles and abstracts by hand and looking through journals manually.	Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews (Thomas and Harden, 2008)	Methodological Advice.

	cases, aiming for maximum variability and designing resulting set of studies to be heterogeneous.				
Mixed Methods Reviews Family					
Mixed Methods Synthesis *Also known as:* Mixed Methods Review	Can be conducted as three separate searches (quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods studies) or as a single comprehensive search without study filters.	Either mixed methods studies (narrow) or related quantitative and qualitative studies (broader) or unrelated quantitative and qualitative studies (broadest)	*Expected:* Either uses filters for each type of included study or sorting and sifting a comprehensive search. Databases selected according to specific types of literature required e.g. trials registers (quantitative) and theses (qualitative). Follow up of references. Contact with experts. Use of grey literature. Particular need to identify sibling and kinship studies. *Discretionary:* Supplementary search techniques used to search around clusters of papers based on citations, relevant theory and concepts.	None currently available. Forthcoming detail in: Noyes et al (2018) Integrating mixed-method evidence in reviews of complex interventions: clarifying the purposes, designs and outlining some methods. *BMJ Global Health.*	Methodological Advice
Bayesian Meta-Analysis Also known as: *Bayesian Approach*	Comprehensive	Quantitative and qualitative research studies	*Expected:* Exhaustive number of relevant subject databases *Discretionary:* Supplementary searches and techniques as for a systematic review	Bayesian Approaches to the Synthesis of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Findings. In Synthesizing Qualitative Research: Choosing the Right Approach (Crandell et al 2012)	Methodological Advice

EPPI-Centre Review Also known as: *EPPI-Centre Outcomes plus Views Review*	Uses sensitive search strategies following systematic review methods.	Quantitative research studies of effects plus qualitative studies of view, including process evaluations where available	*Expected:* Comprehensive search for topic relevant material, without using filters, studies are sifted for inclusion in the respective review. *Discretionary:* Supplementary searches and techniques as for a systematic review.	Mixed Methods Synthesis: A Worked Example (Kavanagh et al 2012) No formal guidance on searching but methods described in: Finding relevant studies (Brunton et al 2017)	Methodological Advice
Critical interpretive synthesis	Purpose of search is to identify potentially relevant papers to provide a sampling frame (e.g. original sampling frame of more than 1,200 records). May use specific phrase searching.	Whole corpus of quantitative, qualitative and theoretical evidence (regardless of study type) Initially may focus on reviews to sensitise team to concepts. Particular focus on time trends in literature and on contemporary literature and new directions of research.	*Expected:* Citation searching; may also require identification of expert opinion/ views, editorial comment, policy documents, political statements, experiences of stakeholders, theoretical/discussion papers, and other colloquial forms of evidence. *Discretionary:* Searching websites; Extensive ancestry searching and reference chaining. Identified references may expose a tangential stream of relevant literature with its own historical development.	No formal guidance. Exemplar paper from originators of method: Conducting a critical interpretive synthesis of the literature on access to healthcare by vulnerable groups. (Dixon Woods et al, 2006)	Current practice

Narrative Synthesis **Also known as:** *Textual Narrative Synthesis*	Typically determined by purpose of review; e.g. comprehensive within systematic review. Searching requires identification of quantitative and qualitative studies that can be integrated in tabular, graphical or narrative form.	Typically, by exclusion, any type of literature for which quantitative analysis (e.g. meta-analysis) is not considered most appropriate	*Expected:* As for systematic reviews. May involve use of methodological study filters Discretionary: As for systematic reviews. May require identification of associated reports to explain differences in context and outcomes.	Guidance on narrative synthesis contains no detail on literature searching.	N/A
Realist Synthesis **Also known as:** *Realist Review*	Initially comprehensive; followed by purposive searching and forays into associated literatures. Realist search involves: 1. Formulate specific lines of inquiry; 2. Explore proposed area of research and, if necessary, refine research question (Background Search); 3. Identify programme theories (Search for Programme Theories) 4. Identify	Typically involves theoretical/ conceptual literature and empirical evidence. May also require community knowledge, practitioner knowledge e.g. press, professional magazines etc)	*Expected:* Search for theory (theor*/ model*, concept*, framework*) and search for empirical research studies (usually omits study filters) plus strategies for practitioner and community sources. Search of multiple sources e.g. grey literature, process evaluations, commentaries opinion pieces, professional fora etcetera. Discretionary: Follow up of Citations, tracing Lead authors, identifying Unpublished materials, searching Google Scholar, tracking Theories, undertaking ancestry searching for Early examples and following up Related projects (embodied in the CLUSTER mnemonic). For searching for theory uses BeHEMoTh (Behaviour of interest; Health context; Exclusions; Models or Theories) search procedure	RAMESES guidance and training materials (Greenhalgh, Wong et al 2013-2018) CLUSTER searching (Booth et al 2013) BeHEMoTh searching (Booth and Carroll 2015)	Official Guidance Methodological Advice Methodological Advice

	empirical evidence to test and refine programme theories (Search for Empirical Evidence) 5. Respond to new information needs when testing and refining of initial programme theory (Final Search to refine programme theories) 6. Document search process in explicit, transparent manner				
Rapid Realist Synthesis	See Above Under Rapid Reviews				
Purpose-Specific Reviews Family					
Concept Synthesis Also known as: *Concept Analysis* *Conceptual Analysis*	Usually comprehensive (involves identifying all uses) within specified concept area and adjacent topics. Requires assembly of sound background	Includes multiple sources (e.g. dictionaries and thesauruses, the media, popular, *historic and discipline and non-discipline specific literature).*	*Expected:* Requires longitudinal tracking of concept; therefore privileges wide date range over broad contemporary searches. Citation searching, follow up of references (requires identification of antecedents and descendants) Discretionary: Specialist disciplinary sources. Related articles features.	None available	N/A

	material, then rich examples of shared unifying characteristics and then identification of model case and exceptions.				
Content Analysis	Usually comprehensive within a pre-defined focused topic area. Requires construction of a definitive sampling frame within which themes or features can be coded and categorised.	Seeks particularly influential or high profile cases e.g. policy documents, high impact journals etcetera	*Expected:* Electronic tables of contents; specialist libraries or document collections. Government and journal websites. *Discretionary:* May require definitive listing of journal contents; all references associated with particular subject headings; conference proceedings	None available	N/A
Expert Opinion/Policy Review	To identify the best available evidence from current expert opinion, text or policy on a certain phenomena	Text and opinion-based (non-research) evidence	*Expected:* Grey literature. For searching published literature, MEDLINE, EMBASE, CINAHL, PsycINFO, Scopus, Web of Science (and any other topic-specific databases relevant to your research question). *Discretionary:* Government websites and contacting relevant organisations may be useful in developing search strategy.	Limited detail of searching in McArthur et al (2015)	Methodological Advice
Technology Assessment Review (Health Technology Assessment)	Comprehensive systematic review searches within time-constrained resources.	*Clinical Effectiveness Review:* Quantitative studies, preferably RCTs (though non-randomised studies may also be used where limited RCT evidence is available).	*Expected:* MEDLINE (including In-Process and Epub ahead of print); Embase and the Cochrane CENTRAL trials database. Validated search filters may be used to restrict study types.	Process of information retrieval for systematic reviews and health technology assessments on	Official Guidance & Methodological Advice

See also: Systematic Reviews family (Systematic Review of Effectiveness; Comparative Effectiveness Review; Meta-analysis; Network Meta-Analysis; Review of economic evaluations)	Often regulated by guidance from specific Health Technology Assessment agency or accepted international methodological guidance.	*Cost-effectiveness review:* Economic evaluations, studies of quality of life/resource use/adverse events or any other data which may inform economic models.	*Discretionary:* Relevant conference proceedings; trials registers PubMed (pre-MEDLINE content) and regional databases. Additional sources may be used for the economic review, e.g. Tufts' CEA registry; Econlit; HTA database. Peer review of search strategies (using PRESS checklist) may be useful if time permits.	clinical effectiveness. EUnetHTA methodological guidance version 1.2 (European network of Health Technology Assessment 2017) Guide to the methods of technological appraisal 2013. (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) Summarized Research in Information Retrieval for HTA (SuRE Info) (HTAi IRG 2011)	
Scoping Review Also known as: *Scoping Study*	Comprehensive search strategy to identify opportunities for future reviews. Needs to accurately estimate the scale of the literature so must be structured around a clear 'population', 'concept' and 'context' of the	Published and unpublished studies, reviews, and ongoing research.	*Expected:* An initial search of a limited number of databases to identify keywords and indexing terms; then a more comprehensive multi-database search strategy using these terms. Should include recent and ongoing research. *Discretionary:* hand-searching of key journals, and contacting of experts in the field.	The Joanna Briggs Institute Reviewers' Manual – Methodology for Scoping Reviews (2015) Scoping reviews: establishing the role of the librarian (Morris et al 2016)	Official Guidance Current Practice

	review (Peters et al 2015)				
Mapping Review Also known as: *Evidence Map* *Systematic Map* *Systematic Mapping Review*	A purposive approach to exploring the breadth of a topic rather than aiming to be comprehensive in a clearly defined area.	Published and unpublished studies, reviews, grey literature, ongoing research.	*Expected:* wide range of databases (potentially covering a range of disciplines /domains/ genres of research), using terms from an initial scoping exercise. Include secondary sources (Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, Campbell Library etc.) to identify existing reviews and PROSPERO to identify reviews in progress. *Discretionary:* full text collections for efficiency; web searches of relevant specialist organisations.	Mapping studies. (Perryman, 2016) A methodology for systematic mapping in environmental sciences (James et al 2016)	Methodological Advice
Methodological Review **Also known as:** *Meta-Method* *Methodology Review*	Describes employed research designs, methods and procedures in a specific area of research; the focus is therefore on the methods used, not on the research results per se.	Draws on methods literature from journal articles and exemplars from the literature. Typically involves methodological handbooks and guidance.	*Expected:* representative databases for all disciplines using methodology. Guidance from key organisations. *Discretionary:* Published and unpublished examples of methodology for descriptive analysis of methods used.	No Guidance, but some examples below: Cooper C, et al. A comparison of results of empirical studies of supplementary search techniques and recommendations in review methodology handbooks: a methodological review. Syst Rev. 2017 Nov 28;6(1):234.	Current Practice

				Brainard J et al. Methodological review: quality of randomized controlled trials in health literacy. BMC Health Serv Res. 2016 Jul 11;16:246.	
Systematic Search and Review	Comprehensive, structured search as for a Systematic Review (the main difference between the review types is the omission of, or at least a less systematic approach to, the other stages in the review process).	As defined by review topic.	*Expected:* A range of databases appropriate to the topic. *Discretionary:* Hand searching of key journals; reference list checking and citation searching of key studies; searches of conference proceedings and registers of ongoing research.	No Guidance, but some examples below: Support needs of patients with COPD: a systematic literature search and narrative review (Carole Gardener et al 2018) - keeps using the word "systematic" suggesting it was downgraded from a planned SR Is the impact of starvation on the gut microbiota specific or unspecific to anorexia nervosa? A narrative review based on a systematic literature search. (Mack et al)	Current Practice

Systematized Review	A systematized review applies a systematic approach to some but not all the review stages. A full comprehensive search may be conducted, or a structured approach may be used for only one or two sources.	As defined by review topic.	*Expected:* Evidence of familiarity with SR methods, but usually not applied to as many sources as a full systematic review. *Discretionary:* Handsearching, reference and citation searching.	A typology of reviews: an analysis of 14 review types and associated methodologies. (Grant & Booth 2009) - describes strengths and weaknesses of this approach. Evidence-based information needs of public health workers: a systematized review. (Barr-Walker, 2017) previously submitted as a piece of Masters coursework.	Methodological Advice & Current Practice

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