Using the Sears List of Subject Headings

This page features several scenarios with step-by-step instructions for searching the Sears List of Subject Headings database on the EBSCOhost interface.

Assigning a Subject Heading to a book you’ve purchased

Once you have determined the subject matter of the book and identified it with an explicit word, you can search the Sears List in EBSCOhost to see if it is an already established term.

To search for a term in EBSCOhost:

1. Enter your term in the Find field and click the Search button.

   ![Search Interface](image1)

   A Result List is displayed.

2. Click the title of the heading that most closely resembles your search term.

   ![Result List](image2)

3. View the detailed record for your selected term.

   ![Detailed Record](image3)
From the detailed record, you can see the narrower terms associated with it. If one of those narrower terms better describes the subject of the purchased book, apply it instead of “airplanes.”

See page xvii-xviii of the front matter for more information on this cataloging principle, Specific and Direct Entry.

Assigning a subject heading to a book you have purchased, and the term you have chosen is not a preferred Sears term.

Once you have determined the subject matter of the book and identified it with an explicit word, enter that word into the Find field to see if it is an already established term in the Sears List. In this case, we have searched for “tortoises.”

1. From the Result List, notice that “tortoises” is not a preferred term, but rather, “turtles.”

2. Click on the applicable record for more information.

According to this record, “turtles” is the preferred Sears term for both “tortoises” and “terrapins.” If your book is specifically about tortoises, apply the term “turtles” for that title in your cataloging system to ensure continuity and common usage.
Assigning a subject heading to a book you’ve purchased for your library, and the subject term you’ve chosen is not in the Sears List.

There are three ways to address this issue:

- Create a new combination of an established heading and a subdivision
- Create a new narrower term for a broader term
- Create a new term

Create a new combination of an established heading and a subdivision

If the book in your hand is about the use and abuse of alcohol on college campuses, the first term that may come to mind is “drunkenness.” Search that for that term.

1. Search for Drunkenness.

2. In the Sears List, “drunkenness” is a non-preferred term and a use for term for two established headings: “Alcoholism” and “Temperance.”

   The Scope Note for “Temperance” reads: “Use for materials on the virtue of temperance or on the temperance movement.” The book you are holding is not about drunkenness in relation to either vice and virtue or the temperance movement, so that heading can be eliminated.

3. Next, navigate back to the Result List and click the “Alcoholism” record.
In this example, your book is not really about alcoholism, but “alcoholism” has a see also note that reads: “classes of persons with the subdivision Alcohol use, e.g. Employees—Alcohol use; Youth—Alcohol use; etc., {to be added as needed}.”

Therefore, the appropriate Sears subject heading for your book would be “College students—Alcohol use.” “College students” is already an established heading in the List, but it could be added if it were not.

Create a new narrower term for a broader term

If the book in your hand is about gloves, and there is no heading in the Sears List for "Gloves," think of the concept or category of thing that would include gloves: “Clothing and dress.”

The see also note for “Clothing and dress” reads: “types of clothing articles and accessories... {to be added as needed}.”

You can then establish the term “Gloves” as a subheading and catalog your book with that term. It would be inappropriate to enter the book under the heading Clothing and dress simply because Clothing and dress is in the List and Gloves is not. It would mean that a user looking in the catalog under Gloves would find nothing. The general references in the List should reinforce the point that the List does not aim at completeness and must be expanded. Even where there is no general reference, narrower terms for types of things and examples and instances of things must be added as needed.
Create a new term

At times it is nearly impossible to determine what broader concept or category a new subject might be included under. This should not deter the cataloger from establishing any heading that is needed. Take, for example, the case of a book on thumb sucking, a common phenomenon among small children. The nearest terms in the List might be Child psychology, Child rearing, or Human behavior, but they are none too near. Nowhere is there a general reference instructing the cataloger to add headings for common childhood phenomena, and still the only appropriate heading for the book would be Thumb sucking. Under these circumstances, it would be appropriate to add the heading Thumb sucking to the List and enter the book into the catalog under that heading.

For more information on when to add a new heading, please see page xxxiv of the front matter (8. A. “Adding New Headings”)

Searching by the Dewey Decimal Number

You can also search the Sears List by Dewey Decimal Number.

To search by Dewey Decimal Number:

1. Go to the Advanced Search page by clicking the Advanced Search link below the Find field.

2. Enter a Dewey Decimal Number in the Find field and select DC Dewey Decimal from the drop-down menu.

3. Click Search and a Result List is displayed.
4. Click on a result to view the Detailed Record.

In addition, all Dewey numbers in the Sears database on EBSCOhost are linked, so clicking on the Dewey number in a detailed record will give you other records associated with that number. For example, clicking on the “598.6” in the record for “Chickens” will give you all records with 598.6 associated with them.