This tutorial will describe background and foreground questions, as well as which library resources can help you answer those questions.

Background questions are general questions that ask the who, what, where, when, why and how about a disorder, test, or treatment.\*

\*How to Formulate a Clinical Question and Effectively Search for the Answer. Neha H. Shah & Susan Keller, MLS. [MedEdPORTAL](https://www.mededportal.org/publication/9213/).

Background Questions  
Here are some examples of background questions:

What’s the difference between Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis?

What are the clinical and laboratory findings associated with Kawasaki disease?

Textbooks are an excellent starting point when you need background information on a subject because they can provide you with summary/overview information on a medical topic.

These are the primary sources to consider searching when you are looking for background information on a topic:

E-textbooks: ClinicalKey, Library Catalog

Print Books: Library Catalog

Foreground questions are narrow clinical questions, usually focused on an intervention or therapy for a particular patient. Foreground questions commonly investigate comparisons, such as two drugs or two diagnostic tests.\*

\*How to Formulate a Clinical Question and Effectively Search for the Answer. Neha H. Shah & Susan Keller, MLS. [MedEdPORTAL](https://www.mededportal.org/publication/9213/).

Foreground Questions

Here are some examples of foreground questions:

In a 70 year old woman with primary insomnia and a previous adverse reaction to hypnotics, can cognitive behavior therapy improve sleep quality and duration?\*

In a toddler with croup, does dexamethasone (or other glucosteroids) reduce symptoms better than standard supportive care?

\*"[Finding Evidence-Based Answers to Clinical Questions - Quickly and Effectively](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~biomed/resources.htmld/guides/FindingGoodAnswers.pdf)". Dartmouth Biomedical Libraries.

Journal articles can help you answer foreground questions. During this tutorial, we are going to search and access journal articles in databases, including PubMed and Ovid MEDLINE. We will also look at how to access journal articles via Find It @ UofSC Libraries.

During this tutorial, we looked at some examples of background and foreground questions, as well as which library resources can help you answer those questions.