Generating and Using Keywords

1. Introduction

1.1 Start

Generating and Using Keywords for Searching Databases!

1.2 Welcome

Welcome to *Generating and Using Keywords for Searching Databases!*
You can listen to or view the contents of this tutorial on the left menu.
To navigate forward click the NEXT button located in the bottom right hand corner of this screen.

1.3 Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this tutorial you will be able to:

- Understand the importance of keywords in a database search
- Recognize and use the three steps to generate keywords:
    - State your topic and what you want to know about it
    - Identify the main concepts of your topic
    - Brainstorm synonyms for your main concepts
- Understand the importance of being flexible with your keywords when searching.

3. Using Keywords

3.1 From Topic to Keywords

One thing to keep in mind is that our focus is on using keywords in research

databases rather than in a Web search such as in Google.

Database searching requires a more structured approach to search them effectively.
Once you have selected a topic for your research, the next step is identifying the keywords critical to describing your topic and generating more before you start searching one of the research databases

3.2 From Topic to Keywords

Let's say you chose self-image among teenagers as your topic. It is helpful at this point to phrase your topic as a question.

Ask yourself what you want to know about self-image and teenagers. This will help focus your research.

It might be interesting to explore whether television, movies, or popular music have an impact on how young people see themselves.

We can easily turn this into a question: Does media have an impact on the self-image of teenagers?

3.3 Pulling out the key concepts

The next step may seem simple but identifying the main concepts in the topic question is important for a successful search.

This question has three major concepts: Media, Self-image and Teenagers.

These keywords will be the building blocks of our search.

It's best to search by keywords instead of phrases or sentences because the more words you add to a search box, the fewer results you'll get back. You are more likely to find useful articles if you start your search with a minimal number of keywords.

3.4 The absence of "impact"

You probably noticed the absence of "impact" as one of the keywords.

"Impact" is certainly an important concept but starting out it will be of more interest to us to see what kind of publications are available on self-image, teenagers and media in total.

Let's hold "impact" in reserve in case we need to refine our search later.

3.5 Alternative Keywords/Synonyms

But we can't stop here with only those three keywords! There may be synonyms for your keywords that can help broaden your search or better describe your topic, not only to make your search comprehensive but to also improve your search results.

Since this step can require more creativity it can be useful to brainstorm synonyms with friends or classmates. What other words can describe your main concepts?

Start making a list of your alternative keywords and synonyms and have them ready when you start searching. You may need them!

3.6 Concept Media

For example, thinking about the concept of media brings to mind the many different kinds of media.

Each one of these could become the focus of your topic question if there are enough sources for any one of them.

3.7 Concept Self-image

See if you can generate more keywords for each concept to hold in reserve.

You never know what terms the authors of articles and other sources might be using to describe what you are interested in.

3.8 Concept Teenagers

For the concept teenagers, adolescence and adolescents is a prime example of synonyms that may be used in more formal, research-oriented research sources. Articles could use the keywords "adolescent", or "young adult" instead of "teenager". If you only search "teenager," other relevant articles might be missed.

3.9 Select a Research Database

Now that you have your key concepts and a list of keywords at hand you are ready to start searching.

Your next step is selecting the research database best suited for your topic and assignment.

One good database to use anytime you are starting a research project is A*cademic Search Premier.* This database includes almost every subject area and has a good basic selection of sources, often with full-text in the database.

3.10 Ready to Search

Separate your keywords into different boxes to retrieve better results.

The advanced search is preferred because it automatically inserts the AND search connector, making it easier for the computer system to understand the

search.

The basic search requires that you insert the AND in the correct location.

3.11 A Look at Subject Headings

As you scan the articles you retrieve, make it a habit to review the "Subjects" field near the bottom of the article records.

For example, in this article record there are other keywords the database uses that could be useful in your searches OR that can even give you some new ideas for your topic.

Say for instance that the Subject "Social media" and "Body image in adolescence" caught your attention and you decide to focus your research on that.

3.12 Brainstorming Sources Activity

(Drag and Drop, 10 points, 3 attempts permitted)

Brainstorming research topics involves generating ideas from various sources.

Drag and drop the best sources for generating ideas into the space provided.

Drag Item	Drop Target
Create a mind map of your topic	Picture 1
Ask a well-intentioned stranger	
Consult a thesaurus	Picture 1
Look for the subject terms associated with an article in a database	Picture 1

Tea leaves, fortune cookies, or cloud formation	
Use an encyclopedia to learn more about your topic	Picture 1
Ask an acquaintance	
Approach keywords with an open mind	Picture 1
Instructor	Picture 1
Consult a librarian	Picture 1
Classmates	Picture 1
Consult a dictionary	Picture 1

3.13 Recommended Related Tutorials

If you are new to database searching, you might also view these related tutorials:

- Topic Identification and Selection
- Developing a Research or Guiding Question
- Using Search Connectors When Searching Databases

3.14 Summary

In conclusion, when you have gathered your keywords and start your search:

- Be flexible; try out different combinations of keywords
- Be alert to other keywords you might find while reviewing article records
- Be patient! Don't give up after one or two tries; try other keyword combinations and give yourself time

And if you have trouble with any part of your research, whether it is coming up with a good topic or the best keywords to use or searching the databases, contact a librarian!

4. Conclusion

4.1 Learning Outcomes

Now that you have completed this tutorial, you can:

- Understand the importance of keywords in a database search
- Recognize and use the three steps to generate keywords:
- State your topic and what you want to know about it
- Identify the main concepts of your topic
- Brainstorm synonyms for your main concepts
- Understand the importance of being flexible with your keywords when searching.

4.2 Conclusion

Congratulations, you have completed the *Generating and Using Keywords for Searching Databases* tutorial!

Click on "Tutorials" to return to the Tutorials page or "Next" to complete a brief quiz.

5. Credits

5.1 Credits

The sources and images used in this tutorial are listed here.