Identifying Keywords

A keyword expresses a central concept or idea about a topic. When searching library databases and resources, you may need to be more selective with keywords.

How do you identify keywords?

**Topic:** Community conditions and depression in adolescents

**Step 1:** Identify the major concepts of your topic

- depression
- community conditions
- adolescents

**Step 2:** Using those concepts, think of keywords that match each concept and then think of synonyms to these words and terms.

- **Keywords for depression:** depression, emotional health
- **Keywords for community conditions:** community conditions, environment, neighborhood
- **Keywords for adolescents:** adolescent, youth, teenagers

**Remember!** It is okay to modify searches. If your first terms do not work, use a synonym or a broader term. Example: community instead of community conditions, youth instead of adolescent

- Begin with 2-3 terms.
- Avoid using long phrases
- Use the database searches to help you come up with more terms. Identify relevant terms and use subject terms listed by the database to help you locate more items on the topic.

**Adapted from Indiana University Libraries, “Identifying Keywords”**

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Searching Techniques

Sometimes, you may receive too many search results. Using the techniques below, you can narrow your search. The most relevant articles may be buried in a longer list of results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Try this:</th>
<th>Why?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“anxiety disorder”</td>
<td>The search will only look for instances where the words anxiety and disorder are next to each other. Use this strategy when you want to keep a phrase or term together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“anxiety disorder” AND children</td>
<td>This search will look for articles that include the search terms anxiety disorder and children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“anxiety disorder” AND child*</td>
<td>This search will look for articles that include the keywords child, as well as children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“anxiety disorder” NOT “men”</td>
<td>This search will exclude or remove articles which reference men.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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