

How to Choose Keywords

You have an essay due date coming up. You've already chosen a research topic, but how do you move forward?

Start with a Search Strategy.

A Search Strategy is the process by which a research question, or topic, is divided into keywords or synonyms (words that mean exactly, or nearly, the same thing) to be entered into a library catalogue, database, or other internet search engine.

All you need to know are the basics to get started.

The keywords you choose to search with will directly affect your search results. Therefore the best possible best possible keywords equal the best possible results.

The best possible keywords are the words that are the most relevant to your topic.

This means that the words you choose should directly relate to the topic you're researching.

Before you begin a keyword searching think about your topic. Decide on some words that express the most important concepts of the research question. Do this activity before you sit down at the computer to search so that you aren't tempted to search with the first words that come to mind.

Grab a pen and paper and let your imagination flow freely, without distraction.

Think: What should the articles and/or books be about?

If your question is: Does driving a vehicle impact the environment? You could use vehicle and environment as keywords, but you would not combine them with impact.

Use words that express subject matter only not words like "effect", "impact" or "reaction" which are comparative in nature.

Make a list, or mind map, of keywords.

Plan for single, or plural words, specific and general words, nouns, adjectives, and verbs.

Ask a friend to help you brainstorm and you'll quickly expand your results.

Write down anything that comes to mind for now, doing away with less relevant terms later on.

When performing a search plan to use between two – four keywords. This combination of terms is called a Search String.

Try out your search strings in different databases. Aim to use at least 3 database for your research.

Remember that each keyword is important because your search will *only* return results containing that word

And finally, throughout all of this remember to take care of yourself by taking mental breaks and feeding your loyal cat.