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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: How does the habit of persistence lead to athletic accomplishments?

Step 1: Identify the major concepts of your topic

Persistence

Athletics

Accomplishments

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

Keywords for persistence: perseverance, determination, endurance

Keywords for athletics: sports

Keywords for accomplishments: goals, objectives

Remember! It is okay to modify searches. If your first terms do not work, use a synonym or a broader term. Example: teenager instead of adolescent, mood instead of mental health

- 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.

Try This	Why?
"athletic goals"	The search will only look for instances where the words athletic and goals are next to each other. Use this strategy when you want to keep a phrase or term together.
"athletic goals" AND persistence	This search will look for articles that include the search terms **"athletic goals"** and persistence**.**
"athletic goals" AND persisten*	This search will look for articles that include the keywords persisent, as well as persistence**.**
"athletic goals" NOT basketball	This search will **exclude or remove** articles which reference basketball in conjunction to athletic goals.

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