Fullerton College
Library

Identifying Keywords

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

How do you identify keywords?

Topic: Do adolescents who play video games experience higher rates of depression?

Step 1: Identify the major concepts of your topic

- Video games
- Adolescents
- Depression

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

- Keywords for video games: video games, gaming, online gaming
- Keywords for adolescent: adolescent, teen, teenager, young adult, youth
- Keywords for depression: depression, mental health, mood, mood disorder

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"

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?**
"video games"	The search will only look for instances where the words **video** and **games** are next to each other. Use this strategy when you want to keep a phrase or term together.
"video games" AND adolescents	This search will look for articles that include the search terms **"video games"** and **adolescents.**
"video games" AND adolescent*	This search will look for articles that include the keywords **adolescent**, as well as **adolescents.**
"video games" NOT adults	This search will **exclude or remove** articles which reference adults in conjunction to video games.

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