Keywords: Keys to information sources

Keywords are important for at least two reasons.

1) Keywords are better for searching when you’re using research tools that don’t like long strings of text (like the library catalog and article databases).
2) Thinking about keywords helps you to think of synonyms or concepts/terminology that is related to your topic.

Step 1: Write your topic below as a single sentence or question.
________________________________________________________________________

Step 2: From that sentence, pull out the 3-5 most important words or phrases.
_________________ ___________________ ___________________ ___________________

Step 3: For each of the keywords or phrases you listed above, list as many synonyms, broader terms, narrower terms, or similar terms as you can. Dictionaries, encyclopedias, and even MS Word’s built-in Thesaurus (under the Review tab) can help with this!

_________________ ___________________ ___________________ ___________________
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Step 4: Use the various keywords you wrote above when searching any resource. This gives you more to try when your topic doesn’t show up.

REMEMBER: You can always add more keywords. When you read an article or even a website during your information gathering, you’ll find terms that you never thought of that are either related to or synonymous with your topic.

Need some research help?
Contact us @ http://www.salisbury.edu/library/research/
EXAMPLE

**Step 1:** Write your topic below as a single sentence or question.

I feel strongly that college campuses should **promote** recycling. What can colleges do to promote recycling on campus?

**Step 2:** From that sentence, pull out the 3-5 most important words or phrases.

college promote recycling campus

**Step 3:** For each of the keywords or phrases you listed above, list as many synonyms, broader terms, narrower terms, or similar terms as you can. Dictionaries, encyclopedias, and even MS Word’s built-in Thesaurus (under the Review tab) can help with this!

- **promote**
  - advocate
  - sustainability
  - schools
- **recycling**
  - encourage
  - waste reduction
  - colleges

**Step 4:** Use the various keywords you wrote above when searching **any resource**. This gives you more to try when your topic doesn’t show up.