Choosing Your Keywords

Keywords are important words used to find books, articles, and websites. They come from your research question.

Write your topic as a question. What do you want to know? This is your research question.

   Example: Why did we bring wolves back into Yellowstone National Park?

Using keywords to search will always retrieve more results than phrases or sentences.

A quick and dirty way to pull keywords from a research question is to choose the most important words or groups of words (people, places, things).

What are the most important words for your question? Fill in these keywords on the back of this handout under the “Important Research Question Words” box.

   Ex. Wolves, Yellowstone National Park

Now take a minute to see if there are one or two words related to your topic that you already know? Fill in these keywords on the back of this handout under the “Important Research Question Words” box.

   Ex. Population

While you’re searching, you might find related words listed under sections called “Subject Terms” or “Keywords” or “Subject Headings.” You can use all or parts of these in future searches to get more articles. Record these in your keyword chart.

   Subject Term(s):
   Wildlife management–Political aspects–United States.

   Reintroduction,
   Wildlife Management

Even while you are reading articles, you may come across new words you think relate to your topic. Feel free to write these down in your keyword chart.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fill-in your topic &amp; keywords</th>
<th>Important Research Question Words</th>
<th>Similar Words</th>
<th>Related words I already know</th>
<th>Related words from Searches</th>
<th>Related words from Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Wolves</td>
<td>Wolf</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Reintroduction</td>
<td>Conservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yellowstone National Park</td>
<td>Yellowstone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Choose 2-4 **keywords** and connect them with AND, OR, NOT

**Examples:**
- Stress AND College
- Indians NOT India
- Pets AND Cats OR Dogs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AND</th>
<th>Searches for places where both keywords appear together</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td>Searches for either of the keywords. They might be together or they might not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT</td>
<td>Searches for places where the first keyword appears without the second.</td>
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</table>