



Using Keywords—English Transcript

There's a lot of information out there. The trick is finding the good stuff. Keywords are important words related to your topic that help you find good information. Whether you're searching the internet or library database, thinking about keywords before you search can save time and help you get better results. This video will show you how to brainstorm keywords for your searches.

You probably already have a topic for your research project, and maybe even an essential question that you are thinking about. The essential question is what guides your research, and it has more than one answer. We will explore the topic of bees in this video. Your essential question is, "How do bees work together as a community?" Let's get started.

Take a look at your question and pick out the words that represent the main ideas: bees, work, and community. These main idea words are your first keywords. Be sure to write down and keep a list of your keywords, which you can add to as you work. Finding the keywords in your question is just the beginning. Let's look at a few ways to brainstorm more keywords.

First, consider synonyms or words that relate to your main idea words. For bees, we could add honey bees, pollinators, and mason bees. For work, we can add roles and jobs. And for community, we can add colony, hive, interdependence, habitat, and social.

Next, brainstorm different forms and spellings of your main idea words. For example, different forms of work would be worker and working, while different forms of pollinators would be pollination and pollen. An example of different spellings for honey bees could be as a single word or as a hyphenated word.

Here's an example of how using keyword variations can change the results of your search. Let's use a library database and the keyword bees. This search returns over 200 results.

Now let's see what happens to the search by changing your keyword to honeybees. The results are now more specific to your topic, and there are less than 100. The more specific keyword narrowed your search results.

Let's explore one of the articles that we found. As you read an article, often you discover new keywords to add to your list. Remember to choose words that relate to your essential question.

For example, in this article, nectar stands out as an important word to understand for your knowledge of bees. However, it does not support the essential question -- "How do bees work as a community?" -- so you wouldn't write it down. On the other hand, from the section, How They Live, we learn about three specific roles that bees have in a colony: queen, workers, and drones. These are excellent words to add to your keyword list.



Whether you are searching a book, library database, or the internet, using keywords will help you find the best information about your topic. For specific examples and for more information about this topic and the entire research process, explore OSLIS. Thank you to the Oregon CLIP Project for allowing the OSLIS Committee to adapt their tutorials. OSLIS -- Learn to Research. Research to Learn.