

Developing a Search Strategy: Creating a Keyword List

Keywords and Keyword Phrases are the words used to search online resources such as a database or the online catalog. You will continue to develop, add to, and change your keyword list throughout the whole research process.

To start your keyword list, write out your topic or research question:

Example: What are the current treatments for Chronic Pain and what are the risks associated with them?

Identify the major ideas/terms – if you had to describe your topic in a few words.

- Treatment
- Chronic pain**
- Risks

Think of synonyms for each of these words – use a Thesaurus (ex. <http://thesaurus.com>) to help.

- Therapy, cure, procedure, management
- Danger, liability, hazard, side effects
- ** Since Chronic Pain is a condition (like Breast Cancer) there are not any appropriate synonyms. Some specific keywords, however, do have alternate terms (ie: >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>)

Now think of specific keywords and related terms that you could add to your list. You may encounter these keywords as you are doing your research.

- Acupuncture, Biofeedback Therapy, Massage Therapy, Pain Medication, Surgery
- Medication Addiction
- Clinical Trials
- Behavior Modification

[illegible]

Building your keyword list should be something that you do throughout your research process, and you could run across potential keywords anywhere (in conversations, class discussions, assigned readings, articles, a report on TV). Just remember to be flexible with your topic and the keywords you use!