



Generating Search Terms – English Transcript

There's a lot of information out there. The trick is finding the good stuff. Whether you're searching the free web or a database, thinking about search terms for your topic can save you time and help you find better results. This tutorial will help you generate effective search terms for your searches.

This video will refer to the phrase "search terms," but you might see "keywords" used in other places. These words are interchangeable. Maybe you're wondering why thinking about search terms is important and how it can help you. It will help you save time and make you a more efficient searcher. Thinking about search terms will help you explore different perspectives or aspects of your topic. It will also help you improve search results by finding more relevant or suitable information. Before we get to specifics, let's look at a very brief overview of the searching process.

First, you define your topic. Next, you brainstorm search terms. Combine these search terms to develop a search string. Then, you perform your search. And next, you can browse results and record new search terms. These new search terms may help you further define your topic. Notice that it's a process which continually evolves. As you search, you may add to your list of search terms, and your topic may develop and change.

Let's look at some methods to brainstorm some good search terms. You may find it helpful to keep a written list of search terms, which you can add to as you go. The first step of brainstorming search terms is to look at your topic sentence, and pick out the words that represent the main ideas. These main idea words can be your first search terms. Use these words to brainstorm synonyms and other search terms to add to your list.

Let's discuss a few ways to brainstorm search terms keeping our example topic sentence in mind. First, brainstorm different forms and spellings of your main idea words. Consider the time period that you're studying and how it might impact your terms. For example, early environmentalists were known as conservationists. Think about how different people in different positions might represent your topic and terms. For example, a lumberjack might refer to the term logging, while an environmentalist might use the term deforestation, and a scientist might refer to forest management.

It can also be helpful to think about ideas and subtopics related to your main idea terms. Subtopics related to our example topic sentence might include healthy forest initiative, salvage logging, or firefighting.

Let's take another look at our topic sentence example. Look at each main idea word and note the list of possible search terms. Now that you've brainstormed search terms, it's time to



combine them to develop a search string to use in performing your search. Remember, your search results may lead to new search terms and redefining 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.