

# IDENTIFYING KEYWORDS

A **keyword** expresses a central concept or idea about a topic. When you search Google, you are keyword searching.

\*NOTE\*-When searching library resources (e.g., databases, library catalog), you may need to be more selective with keywords.

## To Identify Keywords:

**Identify the major concepts of your topic. Then develop keywords related to the major concepts of your topic.**

Databases can be picky about search terms. Identify synonyms for your concept, and consider the words most likely to be used in the database.

**Example:** the *environmental consequences of fracking*

Concept 1: Fracking

**Keywords:**

Fracking  
Hydraulic fracking  
Natural gas drilling

Concept 2: Environmental consequences

**Keywords:**

Environment  
Pollution  
Global Warming

## Tips For Using Effective Keywords

### Concision:

Begin with only 2-3 terms. Avoid long phrases. (The more terms you enter, the fewer results you'll get.)

### Synonyms:

If your first term doesn't work, try a synonym or a broader term.

**Example:** *environment instead of environmental consequences*

### Database Search Results:

Do a quick database search. View the search results page to identify relevant terms.

◦ Titles and article abstracts (summaries) include helpful terms.

◦ Most databases list **subject terms**.

Subject terms show how a database organizes records: they can help you locate more items on that topic and related topics.

### Background Research:

Do some quick background research. Note terms that are often used to discuss the topic.

(Reference sources like Wikipedia or the library databases Encyclopedia Britannica and Credo Reference offer overviews of many topics. Of course, remember to evaluate information in Wikipedia with particular care.)

Use Subjects to Identify Keyword

A search for *fracking environment*:

Searching: OneSearch@IU

Keyword - **fracking environment**

[Search Options](#) ▶ [Basic Search](#) [Advanced](#)

**Subject**

- hydraulic fracturing (474)
- oil wells -- hydraulic fracturing (249)
- government regulation (161)
- environmental protection (155)
- natural gas (147)
- oil wells -- environmental aspects (111)

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Select relevant terms to refine your results.