My Research Project: Identify Search Terms

To generate keywords for your searches, use one or more of the following strategies.

1. Review your research question, position statement, thesis statement, and working bibliography. Highlight important words and phrases, the names of important authors, and titles of important sources. Create a list of keywords and phrases.
2. Choose one of the words or phrases in your list of search terms and brainstorm about it. Create a list of terms that might be related in some way to the search term you’ve chosen. Don’t worry about how well each new term might work. Instead, jot down ideas as quickly as you can. Then review your list and add the most promising words or phrases to your list of search terms.
3. Choose one of the words or phrases and freewrite about it. Write quickly, without worrying about grammar or mechanics. Then review your freewriting, highlight words and phrases that might serve as search terms, and add them to your list.
4. Try a looping activity by using one of the words or phrases from your freewriting activity as the starting point for a new freewriting session. Repeat the process several times, choosing a promising new word or phrase as a new starting point. At the end of your looping session, highlight promising words and phrases and add them to your list of search terms.
5. Use clustering to generate new search terms. Place a word or phrase from your list at the center of a piece of paper, in the middle of a word processing document, in a blank document in an image editor, or in a phone or tablet mind-mapping app such as iThoughtsHD or SimpleMind. Add related terms, and then add terms related to those terms. Add the most promising new words and phrases to your list of search terms.
6. Identify synonyms for words in your list of search terms by using one or more of the following strategies.

* Open a word processor and use its built-in thesaurus. In Microsoft Word, you can find the thesaurus in the Review ribbon.
* Visit a Web site such as Thesaurus.com or the Merriam-Webster Online Thesaurus (merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/).
* Search the Web using the search term preceded by the word *synonym* or *define*.
* Consult a print thesaurus, such as *Roget’s 21st Century Thesaurus* or *Webster’s New World Pocket Thesaurus*.

1. Use sentence starters, such as the following, to generate additional search terms.

* The word \_\_\_ reminds me of \_\_\_.
* If I were focusing on \_\_\_, I would need to think about \_\_\_.
* \_\_\_ couldn’t happen without \_\_\_.
* The most important aspect of \_\_\_ is \_\_\_.
* The most important thing about \_\_\_ within my major is \_\_\_.