Keywords & Searching

Hi, you’re here with Jane, and we’re talking about keywords and searching so that you can be better academically prepared for what lies ahead.

You might be familiar with words such as these. I remember words such as Compare and Contrast when I studied the HSC. They were drummed into me.

Keywords help you understand the assignment, and they give you words you can search in a catalogue or Google or Google Scholar or a big database. You can get an idea of your keywords by looking at Instructions, Topics, Limiters and Materials of the assignment question.

I have a typical assignment question for you to look at. What do you think would be the Instructions in this question? If you want to have a guess, pop it in the Chat Box. Instructions tell you how to construct your answer or how to write your response. They are usually located at the beginning of the sentence.

We have some answers coming in. “Compare and Contrast” – I think we will probably get a few more of those. “While also making reference” – Interesting. “Make reference to advantages” – Yes! You’ve actually gone one step ahead of me. I was expecting just “Compare and Contrast” and I was going to suggest, what about Advantages and Reference. “Consider what the textbook has to say” – I’ve got that one coming up. I’ve got that under Materials. “Consult the sources” – I’ve got that coming up under Materials. Really, I’ve just got “Compare and Contrast” as the answer for the Instructions. But you’re all a bit ahead of me. Compare means to find similarities between ideas and Contrast means to find the differences. Ah, “Clear and concise” – I like that. That is certainly something to keep in mind when you are tackling the essay.

Topics. See if you can spot the topic of this assignment. For instance, is it about Childcare, is it about Road Rage? What’s it about? The topic or topics are a word or set of words which define the subject that you’re writing about. The topic’s usually the keyword you are concentrating on when you are in our library Catalogue which we call SEARCH. Or if you’re in a database or a Google product. And you’ve got it. Globalisation is the topic of this assignment. So it’s going to be the main keyword you are going to concentrate on. Correct. I love that you’re participating in this. That’s great.

Limiters. As I describe what a Limiter is, you can put in the Chat what you think the Limiters would be. Sorry, I think my voice is cracking up a little. Limiters are used to focus and refine the topic. They might limit the topic by place, date or something else. What would meet that description here? Any thought about location or date? Current year is correct. And some would also say “First age” because it’s an age, it’s another era. And there are no right or wrong answers, there is just your interpretation. Whoops – I’ve gone too far.

What about Materials? We had some suggestions earlier of textbooks. So, it’s handy when the lecturer or academic suggests where to start. And if they give you a quantity, such as you might be looking for, say, twenty research papers or books, it gives you an idea of how you don’t want to fall under that. “Scholarly resources” – that’s quite correct. Have you head of Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles? You’ll see
them mentioned in our catalogue. And they’re the pinnacle, the highest type of reference because they have been examined by independent parties. And the article has been kept anonymous – they don’t know who has written it and people who are expert in their field examine it and make sure it’s worthy of publication. We did have textbooks, research papers, other source and books. But you could think out of the box. You might find something on websites or you might have found a Twitter Tweet that you want to reference. So, all-in, these are the things you would highlight about your assignment question. And we’ve already found a couple of extra keywords, such as Advantages, Disadvantages and Current Context, and it’s time to start searching. Are there any questions about Keywords? I might just flick back to the names there. Instructions, Topics, Limiters, and Materials. They might be some things you want to write down and take away with you. I will show you those words again, right at the end. As it is time to move on. Oh, “Grey Literature” – good point. I might even put that into my notes for next time. Actually, I’m writing that down.

Fantastic. We’ve got some voting going on. Now, you might know Boolean Searching as those words: AND, OR, NOT, ADJACENT, NEAR. Phrase Searching, I think, is my favourite thing. Maybe Truncation. That’s when you put a little asterisk after a word. So, a word like, train, I could put an asterisk on the end and it will find Trains, Training and Train. I’m glad none of you said “None of the above”. Oh, I haven’t shown you the results. There we go. So, our high score was phrase searching. It’s changing. A nice, even spread, I would say.

Let’s have a look at my quick presentation. So, obviously, I’m fairly sure you’ve searched. You’ve searched Google, you’ve been known to dabble in things like Wikipedia, Ancestry.com, there are so many places today, so many things online that you might search. It’s a very handy skill. I’ve got another assignment question here. A little shorter this time. “What proportion of men to women are the victims of domestic violence?” If we had to search for that on Google, Google Scholar, library catalogue, etc., or a database, we can think about Boolean operators, phrases, truncation, refining your search and advanced searching. And we’re going to go through those.

As I said, Boolean operators are AND, OR, NOT, are the three most common ones. So, in this question, you can see you can use a combination of AND, OR and NOT as you see fit. “Domestic AND violence AND victims AND men OR male” – that’s an alternative word, so we use OR. AND narrows the search and OR widens the search. So, we’re pulling our search in two different directions and we’re getting more relevant results. What do you notice about the Boolean operators there? The way I’ve typed them? What do you think about that? Why is AND different to “domestic”? A couple of us are typing. I’ll just wait and see if Lesley’s comes through. And Linda. If you’re in the middle of typing...Sanjeevan, you’re correct. It’s the Caps Lock. And I’ve used that on purpose, no so that you see the word, but search engines like Google and the library website actually take notice when the words are in capitals. They go “Oh, that’s a Boolean operator as opposed to that’s a little throw away word that I won’t take any notice of”. Linda said “To distinguish the word”. That’s right. It tells the software “Hey, take notice”.

What about Phrases. We could package the words domestic violence together in inverted commas so we don’t get irrelevant results, such as ... if the words are separate you might get “violence at the domestic airport” and you don’t want that. You want violence in the home. You want to know about it. So, we use those inverted commas or quotation marks.

Truncation. The asterisk, the little star. If we put W-O-M-*-N – what are some of the words that might pull up? Can you think of any? And you can also have a go at the violen* one. What’s it telling the search
engines to do? Excellent, women or woman. That’s correct. So it saves me doing the search twice. Different spellings. Yes! Imagine the American spelling ‘C-O-L-O-R’ and we’ve got C-O-L-O-U-R, you could put the asterisk in and get both. Although many search engines are smart enough to see which ever way you spell it and go and look for both versions for you. But this way we can be sure.

So, so far my search is, in inverted commas, “domestic violence”, men – notice I’ve dropped the word AND, because most search engine, or all that I know of, take it as assumed that if you put in two words it’s going to go “this and this” – it knows. So, “domestic violence” men victim and I put the asterisk so I also get victims or victimization. And I’ve got an example what happens if you put those terms in our catalogue. In our SEARCH. In our search engine at the library. You can see the words – let me see, I haven’t done this for awhile. Get my pointer. You can see the words domestic violence men victim asterisk. You can see that has brought-up 63 000 articles, peer-reviewed ones, 115 000 full-text things, 6 books on the shelf in the library, and then there’s more breakdown. Note the Subject. I really love getting those big results, they’re too many to manage. I love getting them down by looking at Subject. I go straight to More Options. And let’s see what happens if you do that. It brings up a little box. And you can decide … you can put a little tick. So, we want to know about abused men. There are 90 resources about that. That is much more reasonable. And that will even come down if I say, limit the search to just recent articles and books. Abused men, abused gay men – I may also be interested in that. And abused husbands. They all fit the bill. And they’re filtering-out those hundreds of thousands of results about abused women that have been studies a lot and may not be the focus of my research.

What happens if I do tick those three subject boxes? Actually, that’s coming up next, I think. We’re going to take a quick look at advanced searching. I’ve got the same search words in there. Sorry if the type’s a little small for you, but it looks OK on my iPad. With the Advanced Search in the library’s catalogue you can say things like “I just want them from a specific journal or you can play around with the dates or type of material or the language, but you can also do that, if I go back a couple, you can also do that with the things you find down the left-hand-side of the library catalogue. Put in the Chat Pod, has anyone found the Advanced Search in Google? Excellent. I love it. I love finding things that don’t have the copyright restrictions on them by using the Advanced Search in Google. Just something to look out for.

So, when I do my search using the same words, in the library catalogue, and I’ve clicked the Subject boxes, I still have an awfully large amount of material to go through, but luckily something really handy has floated right to the top. If it hadn’t, I could maybe say I just want Peer-reviewed journals or books and eBooks or something like that. So we’ve got our well-structured query, we’ve considered doing an Advanced Search, we’ve started Refining, and we’re finding more things that we can actually use. I’m going to change layouts now.

We’ve come to the end. Our time is up. You’ve probably got to get off to lunch or lectures or feed the children – whatever is going on in your life. It’s time to wrap-up. Feel free to draw on our whiteboard. If you were a little late in the room I may not have given you drawing permissions yet. I’m just checking. Can anyone get it…can anyone put a drawing on the whiteboard there? Yes! I was afraid I might have locked you out of it or something. So feel free, if there is one thing that has stuck in your mind, and there are some things here to recap. Hi, indeed. So, maybe – what’s your take-home message. Are you going to maybe try out truncation, refining your search, using those Subject tick-a-boxes – they’re my favourite thing, or are you going to look at your question and not just highlight keywords randomly, are you going to ask yourself which ones are the Instruction Words and which ones are the Limiters?
Sajeevan, I’m not sure if you’ve got your... I think you’ve got your permissions now. I think I gave them to you a little late. If you’ve got any questions, pop them in the Chat Box. I’m going to stop recording and give you the recording link straight away. So, hang in there for a second and if you’ve got any questions, maybe put them in the Chat Pod.