2. Finding Keywords

Identify topic words from assessments  
Create lists of keywords  
Learn about finding synonyms

Before you can begin using MultiSearch or the Library’s databases, you need to know exactly what it is you are searching for. In this tutorial, you’ll be asked to take a look at an assessment question and create lists of synonyms for each of the topics or key themes it is asking you to write about.

**Identify Topic Words**

Identifying the topic words from your assessment task is an essential first step in beginning the research process. Searching with these words and phrases direct you towards the most relevant information. Topic words and phrases are the main areas or themes you will need to consider when you begin researching for any assessment task. Topic words are highlighted in the example below.

*Write an essay reflecting on a personal experience of loss and your process through grief. Apply relevant models to explain the experience and outline possible interventions.*

**Create Lists of Keywords**

Once you have identified key phrases and topic words, make a list of synonyms or related concepts for each of them. In doing so, you are trying to list all the ways authors might write about that concept. Here is an example taken from the example question above.

**Topic 1: Concepts of Grief and loss**
- Mourning, mourn, mourned
- Kübler-Ross, Neimeyer, Parkes, Bowlby
- Bereavement, bereave, bereaved
- Trauma, traumatic, traumatised
- Grief, grieving, grieve, grieved

**Topic 2: A Personal Experience**
- Pets, animal companions
- Dogs, cats, birds
- Disenfranchised grief

**Topic 3: Interventions**
- Therapy, treatment, counselling, psychotherapy
- Strategies, coping, models, processes
- Techniques, recovery
How to Find Synonyms

Use your readings, articles you’ve already found, subject words from journal databases, and other tools such as thesauri to find synonyms and alternative phrases.

There are a few ways of collecting synonyms for the key themes in your assessment questions. Firstly, look at online thesauri such as the Oxford English Thesaurus. Secondly, identify synonyms or related terms while you are reading. It is a good idea to jot down these terms as you read so that you can refine your search at a later time. Finally, take a look at the subject tags associated with resources you find. In MultiSearch, these are located in the details tab. Other sources, such as journal databases, will display subject terms in the detailed record of each article.

Tutorial Checklist

- I am able to identify topic words from assessment questions.
- I can create lists of synonyms for the key topics in my assignments.
- I know how to find synonyms and subject terms.

Ask a librarian