Hi, I’m Kimberly Wirth a Librarian at the Porter Henderson Library. In this video I will show you how to choose strong keywords and use synonyms for better results when searching for information.
Being able to apply strategies like choosing good keywords and synonyms enables us to construct better database searches and saves time.

Let’s say the research question we’re exploring is: How bad is video game addiction in our culture?

We go to U-Search and type the entire research question into the search box and do a keyword search.
and get zero results. Our search was not successful because we need to “talk” to the databases differently than we talk to the internet or with each other. Let’s take a quick look at how U-Search searches.

U-Search, RamCat, and the Databases contain collections of online forms known as item records that contain descriptive information such as the item’s title, author, and so on. U-Search uses the words we put in the search box to scan these pages.
U-Search gave us zero results because it can’t guess what the important words are so it looked for all the words in our question. We need to tell U-Search what the key words are.

Look at our question: what sticks out as the most important words and concepts?
Keep in mind that words that don’t generally stick out are non-descriptive words like you, who, an, the, or by.

So, what does that leave? Words like nouns and verbs.

In our research question the nouns are video game, addiction, and culture. We didn’t really have a strong verb, so we’ll stick with the nouns.
Let’s type in those words and do a keyword search.

We got 209 results. Not bad, but what if our keywords didn’t return information on topics that we needed?

Using Synonyms

Video Game Addiction Culture = video game and addiction and culture

- Synonyms for video game
- Synonyms for addiction
- Synonyms for culture
Using synonyms with our keywords allows us to find more information on similar topics.

### Keywords for our topic

- **Video Game Addiction Culture**: video game and addiction and culture

  - **Synonyms for video game**
    - Electronic games, online games, ...

  Other synonyms could be to:
  - *name the type of game*: Action, Role-playing, Simulation, Sports
  - *name the system*: Computer-based, PS4, Xbox, Wii U, handheld devices or apps for smartphones & tablets.

We can use a thesaurus to find synonyms for our keywords. There are many other ways to express our keywords such as thinking of the type of game or system used for video games.
Let’s move our keywords to separate lines and add in some synonyms.

Then put the Boolean Operator “or” in between each term to tell the database we want records with either word.

We’ll keep the Boolean Operator “and” in between the lines to tell the database that we want records that contain either the keyword or synonym for each of our key concepts.
We will leave the “select a field” box alone since that is the same as a keyword search.

And we’ll click search
We now have over 8,000 results that are closely related to our question. We can explore by using different synonyms to see how the results change.

To recap:
- Write your question as a sentence.
- Identify the important words - keywords
- Use synonyms to bring in more information
- Try using different word combinations

Writing your question as a sentence helps identify the good keywords. Using synonyms brings in more information on your topic. And, if you don’t like your results, try different word combinations.

This concludes the video on keywords & synonyms. Please contact us if you have any questions.