Hartness Library
Serving Vermont Tech and the Community College of Vermont

Keywords & Subject Terms

This activity helps you develop a plan to explore your topic. Answer the preliminary questions, then move on to developing a keyword and subject terms to begin your research.

TO BEGIN

The following questions help you take stock of resources you can use to locate, collect, and manage information related to your topic.

1. Which resources can I search or browse to learn more about my topic?

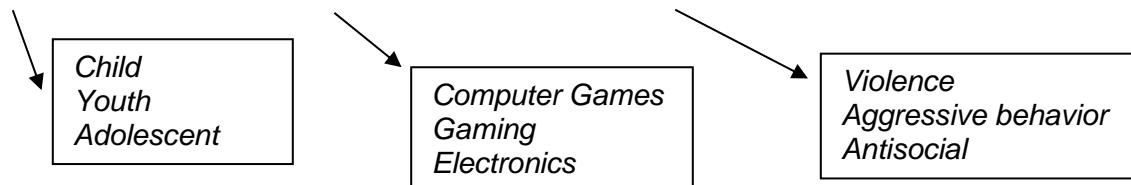2. How can I keep track of information I collect as I explore my topic?

KEYWORDS

To generate keywords for your searches, write out your research question and then underline or boldface the most important words and phrases in the sentence.

3. For each word you underline, brainstorm a list of related words or phrases that you can use in your search for sources. Remember, you can use the root word to ensure all possible word endings.

Example:

Are **children** who play **video games** more likely to be **violent**?

Child *Youth* *Adolescent*	*Computer Games* *Gaming* *Electronics*	*Violence* *Aggressive behavior* *Antisocial*

4. What other aspects of your topic do you wish to focus on? *(such as location, time period, or specific group of people)*

Example:

- United States, New England, Vermont
- Currently, over the last 10 years
- Elementary, middle, high school

SEARCH TIPS

Searching for Common Phrases

Putting **"quotation marks"** around words will allow you to search for an exact phrase. For example, **"video games"** means that you will search for that exact phrase, rather than searching for **video** and **games** as two separate words.

Advanced Search Options

Every search tool has advanced search options which allow you to search more efficiently. If you want to search by author, date of publication, format, or resource type, try using the advanced search options of any search tool.

SEARCHING ACTIVITY

Now that you have a few good keywords and search tips, try searching for articles in a library database, like *Academic Search Premier or PowerSearch* (you'll find them on the library website under **Find > Articles (Research Databases) > General Subject Databases**).

Search Example: "video games" AND children AND violence

Subject terms are the standard vocabulary words that libraries use to organize materials. Identifying subject terms for your topic is a great way to identify the best search words to use to find relevant books and articles.

> **5.** Locate two or three articles that are relevant to your topic. **Within the article record, identify the subject terms associated with that article**.

Examples:

- violence in video games
- video games -- psychological aspects
- video games & children
- violence on television

By now, you should be well on your way to finding sources for your topic. Remember that you can always **Ask a Librarian** for recommendations and help with keywords!
http://hartness.vsc.edu/ccv/ask