
[From Question to Keywords: Beginning Academic Research](#) (Video)

[Lloyd Sealy Library YouTube Channel](#)

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[Lloyd Sealy Library](#)

[John Jay College of Criminal Justice](#)

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Summary

This video covers how to:

- break down your research topic into keywords
- expand those keywords with synonyms and related words
- mix & match your keywords in a library database

Transcript

This video shows you how to get from your research topic to keywords.

So for example, let's say that your research topic is: the wage gap for women in America. Your first instinct might be to put that into a search box and just Google your whole question, hoping you'll save time and use some of the top results as your sources. But that is not the way you do college-level research! Why? Because while some of the information you find on the open internet may be useful and reliable, these are mostly NOT academic sources.

So how do you find academic sources on your research topic? Use keywords in library databases!

Step one: Find your keywords. Pick out the main concepts in your research question. Here, that's wage, gap, women, and America. That's all for step one!

Step two: Expand your keywords by finding synonyms and related words. Brainstorm and use a thesaurus to come up with more keywords. Think about the terms an academic researcher would most likely use. You'll come up with a small word bank for each of your main keywords. Think also about the broader concepts. For example, this question is talking about discrimination, bias, and sexism in the workplace. As you do research, you might come across more keywords and concepts, too.

Step three: Mix and match your keywords in a library database, like GALE. See these two fields? That means it's keyword time! Start to mix and match your keywords and see what kind of results you get. Add a new line for another keyword to focus your search even more.

So, just to review: You'll turn your topic into keywords. You'll expand those keywords with synonyms and related words. Then you'll mix and match your keywords in a library database.

Happy searching!