



Description

Academic research was once the domain of librarians in universities. Their expertise and ability to make analytical connections among and within fields of study played a [critical role in the research process](#). While their expertise is still useful to researchers, keyword search results have replaced some of their functionality. Researchers can now find much of what they are looking for by plugging keywords into a search engine.

Keyword search results help researchers to find articles that are relevant to their own research interest. These results also let researchers know what other scientists are working on similar projects and what journals may accept their submissions. Conversely, authors will need to select appropriate keywords or phrases (“long tail keywords” – usually 3 words) to use in their work in order to increase readership.

Keyword Research Tools

First-time authors or those who simply prefer to employ technology can choose from a variety of keyword planners and other tools that help to analyze a document and select the keywords.

[Medical Subject Headings \(MeSH\)](#)

- MeSH on Demand – automatically identifies relevant MeSH terms from text using Natural Language Processing and the National Library of Medicine’s Medical Text Indexer
- The MeSH Browser – allows users to search directly for MeSH terms and conduct text-word searches of the Annotation and Scope Note fields of records

[Google Keyword Planner](#)

- Finds the keywords that are most pertinent to your field of study/area of interest
- Shows trends in keyword searches

[Google Trends](#)

- Shows how often a particular search-term is entered relative to the total search-volume across various regions of the world, and in various languages

Keyword Tool

- Generates long-tail keyword suggestions based on Google trends

Boolean Search

- Method of searching rather than a tool, per se
- Allows searchers to refine their search to specific pairings of words with the use of quotation marks and capitalization of “operators”
- Uses logical relationships between search term

All of these tools are based upon continuously changing and improving algorithms and claim to be reliable and effective. Add the expertise of a seasoned research librarian and authors can feel secure in their keyword selection process.

How to Select Keywords

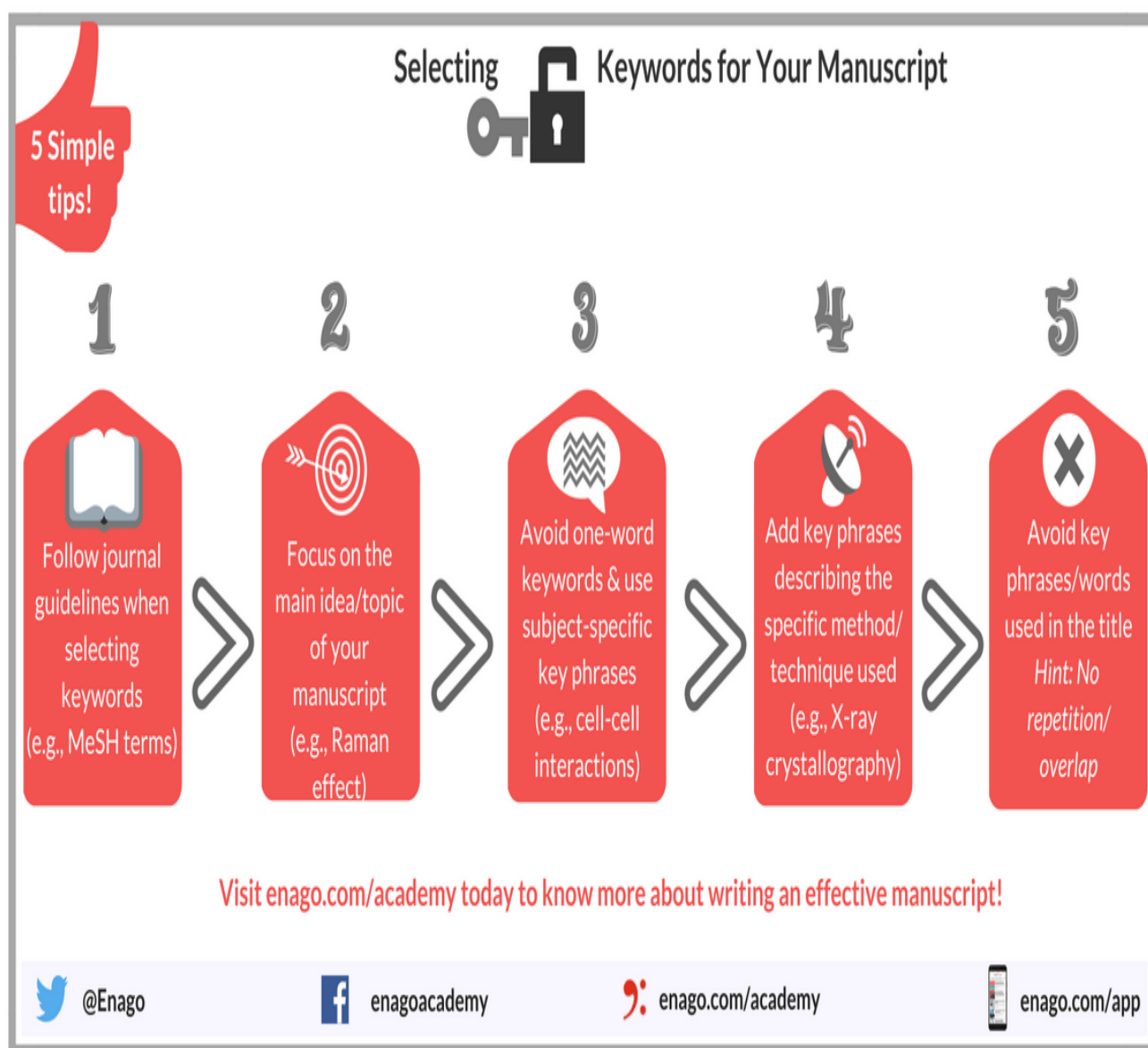
Selecting keywords for research articles is not difficult, but it does take some strategizing. The most important component of the article is the title – “The search engine assumes that the title contains all of the important words that define the topic of the piece, and thus gives higher weightage to the words appearing there.” Therefore, the words of the title represent the main concepts of the article. In addition, the title should be clearly stated.

Keyword usage in the body of the article or abstract should follow these [guidelines](#):

1. Keywords should represent key concepts
2. They should be descriptive
3. Keywords should reflect a collective understanding of the topic
4. Limit keywords/phrases to 3-4
5. Use synonyms of keywords throughout
6. Reuse keywords and phrases throughout article or [abstract](#)

The best keywords are proper names, specific procedures or techniques, outcome areas, capitalized events and eras, titles of books or articles, and definitions. Once keywords and phrases have been determined, the author will need to incorporate them into a well-written piece. Although it is useful to repeat keywords and phrases throughout the article, the repetition should not impair the article's readability, which is paramount.

Another element to consider, potentially before any thought has been given to keywords and phrases, is the requirements of journal(s) to which the article will be submitted. Journals often have specific policies regarding submissions, including the usage of keywords. [Online manuscript submission](#) forms will generally have an area for keywords.



Online Visibility Impacts Citations

Another important aspect of keyword selection is its impact on citations. An article that is easy to find is more likely to be cited. Within the realm of citations and increasing online visibility, [Google Scholar](https://scholar.google.com/) is a tool that allows users to search for digital or physical copies of articles. Results appear in order of the author's ranking, the number of linked references, and their relevance to other scholarly literature. Furthermore, appearance of results are also based on ranking of the publication in which the article appears. This tool is useful when investigating an article's position among others of similar content. Have you used the tools mentioned in this article for identifying good keywords? Do you have any suggestions for your peers? Please share your thoughts in the comments section below.

Category

1. Career Corner
2. Product & Service Reviews

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