

Crowdsourcing Keywords Activity

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This is a simple lesson that can be done using a whiteboard type program (like Padlet) or with sticky notes in a classroom space. In the activity, students will practice brainstorming keywords together based on the topics they and their peers are researching. This activity is best done as students start their research on a topic. At the end of the lesson, all students should have at least a couple of keywords to use for searching based on the information they have shared about a topic.

By participating in this activity students will be able to:

- Describe how keywords or search terms are useful for searching in databases in order to utilize them effectively.
- Create keywords for various topics/research questions in order to develop keywords for their own topics.

Instructions:

Brief discussion on keywords and why they are important.

Have any of you searched using keywords? Can you describe what a keyword is?

- Keywords are the most descriptive terms in a question or quick description of a topic. If you would write out a question or topic, you could remove the articles and connective words to narrow down to the keywords.
- For example: What effect does **sleep hygiene** have on **learning** and **cognition**? From this I could isolate sleep hygiene, learning, and cognition. I wouldn't pick effect as a keyword because it only describes the relationship between your keywords.
- Most databases are designed for keyword searching. That means these databases are more powerful if you use these types of short descriptive words and phrases. And if you find the right keywords, it is much easier to find the information that you are looking for.
- Because of this, it is helpful to have a list of keywords available when you start a search (and that you can add to). It can be likely that the first keywords you select won't give you the information you need.
- So we are going to work together as a class to help everyone develop a list of keywords based on their topic.

Activity:

- Introduce where students are sharing their topics/research questions. This can be on post-its, a dry erase board, digital whiteboard, etc.
- In addition to verbally explaining the instructions, it is helpful to have them posted somewhere, either in the digital whiteboard if using or on a slide presentation so students can also read the instructions.

- Demonstrate how you would like students to participate by demonstrating how to write the information about their topic and research question in the mode or medium you are using.
- Give students time to write about their topic and place it where other students can comment with potential keywords.
- Demonstrate how you would like students to comment on each other's topics. Do one together to get students on the right track - pick one topic and add a keyword or two to it. Ask students for their suggestions. Discuss obvious keywords that come from the language of the topic and using synonyms and related language/concepts.
- Give students time to comment on each other's topics/research questions with keywords. It can be helpful to give a time limit for this activity, but also keep in mind each topic should have a list of keywords when the activity is done.
- As an instructor, comment on topics too - especially ones that might be trickier for students to come up with keywords for.

Wrap up:

- Ask students how it went, do they feel satisfied?
- At this point students can select one to two keywords to begin their search in a database.

Additionally, see the sample Padlet image from a teaching demonstration before students add their topics and keywords.

