Welcome to the Johnson and Wales University Denver Campus Library. In this tutorial we will define keywords, discuss their importance in research, and provide you with strategies to track and create additional keywords.

A keyword is a significant or focused word selected by the researcher to locate materials in electronic databases, catalogs, or search engines.

Creating a list of multiple words to describe your topic is important because different authors or publishers may use different terminology to describe the same topic. Using different keywords in your search strategy can help you locate resources you may not have otherwise found.

There are many strategies you can use to create a list of keywords.

One is to use prior knowledge of the topic. Write down what you already know about the subject matter. Next, write down what you would like to know about the topic. To identify the keywords, circle or underline the main points you just wrote down.

Conducting background research can also help you identify additional keywords on your topic. Use the keywords you’ve already developed to locate information within dictionaries, thesauri, encyclopedias, textbooks, bibliographies, library catalogs or article databases. As you peruse these sources, circle or note new keywords you may not have previously used.

Organizing and tracking the keywords you use in your search strategies can save you a great deal of time in the research process. It ensures you are using different terminology to find the most relevant information for topic as well as helps you avoid duplicate searches. A keyword chart is one method for organizing the terminology related to your topic.

An example keyword chart can be found under Step 1 on the Library’s Research Process Guide at: http://den.library.jwu.edu/researchprocess.

If you need help, assistance is available in person, on the phone, via email, chat or text. Go to the Denver Campus Library homepage at http://den.library.jwu.edu for more information.