

Deconstruct and Reconstruct

Learning outcome: Students will develop a list of keywords from their research question. (20 min)

Assessment: List of words created on the board

Artifact: Worksheet

Introduction:

It's important to think about the key ideas that go into your argument. The words you use to search the databases make a big difference in what gets returned in your list. In your paper, you're going to take a stance on something. When you take a stance, words matter. The same goes for many of your sources. Academics take a position on a topic, so you'll be finding different sources with different words. So do newspapers, organizations, and so on. Furthermore, you use your keywords to drive your research. When you Google something, you can put just about anything in and Google will figure it out. It's not the same in databases.

Activity:

Use the whiteboard to write one of the following statements or research questions on the board or come up with your own that will fit the assignment for the class. Or, ask for a research question from the students.

Example research question general research assignment: How does access to food impact childhood development?

- Have them eliminate all non-essential words. Left with “access” or “food” “childhood development”
- Using those words, have class brainstorm synonyms to those concepts
- Pass out handout (Brainstorming Keywords): Ask students to use their research topic and determine their main concepts and come up with keywords - first work alone, then work with a partner (to get more keywords)
- Ask for two volunteers and do basic searches with their keywords in *Academic Search Complete*
- Describe how the connectors AND and OR work within the databases. AND limits the results by connecting different main concepts together. OR broadens results by looking for multiple keywords for the same main concept.
- Search based on example: *access AND food AND childhood development*
- Search based on example: *access to food OR food insecurity OR food security*
- Have students build search strings with their main concepts on back of worksheet

If desired, have students work with partners and search *Academic Search Complete* using their search strings. Have them send you a link to one scholarly article that fits their research topic.

More example questions:

Example research question for argument paper: How can the Electoral College more closely represent each voter in the United States?

- Have them eliminate all non-essential words. Left with “reform” or “abolish” “Electoral College”
- Using those words, have class brainstorm synonyms to those concepts (Choose two)
- Pass out handout (Brainstorming Keywords): Ask students to choose two of their concepts and first work alone, then work with a partner (to get more keywords)
- After working with their two concepts, discuss how to locate some counter argument/opposing viewpoints with the following databases: *Opposing Views in Context*, *Points of View Reference Center*, *CQ Researcher* or *Wikipedia*
- Ask students to return to worksheet with ideas for keywords from their opposing view

Example thesis statement for policy paper: In order to have every vote count, we should reform/abolish the Electoral College (Modify this as appropriate for your class).

- Have them eliminate all non-essential words. Hopefully then left with “Electoral College” “reform” or “abolish”
- Using these two words, have class brainstorm synonyms or related words to these concepts. Note that they may need to use quotations around “Electoral College”
- Pass out handout, work alone, then work with a partner (to get more keywords)
- After working with their two concepts, discuss how to locate some counter argument/opposing viewpoints with the following databases: *Opposing Views in Context*, *Points of View Reference Center*, *CQ Researcher* or *Wikipedia*
- Ask students to return to worksheet with ideas for keywords from their opposing view

Example topic for pro/con paper: Electoral College Reform

Pro: “We should reform the Electoral College.”

Con: “The Electoral College should be abolished (or kept as is).”

- 5-10 mins: Brainstorm as a class: General, Pro, and Con keywords and key ideas
- 10 mins: Hand out worksheet, work alone, then work with a partner