Grad501

A quick guide for defining effective keywords in literature search

(with examples for topic- or title-search in ISI WebOfScience)

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• Formulate your topic into a research question
  
  *Guides for effective time management for graduate students*

• Break down your research question into key concepts.
  
  *Guides*  *effective*  *time management*  *graduate students*

• Determine the synonyms and/or related terms and/or abbreviations and/or formulas for the key concepts.

  *Guides* = guides OR guidelines OR hints OR OR tricks OR methods OR ways OR advices

  *Effective* = effective OR efficient OR fruitful OR productive OR ...

  *Time management* = time management OR time-management

  *Graduate* = grad OR master OR phd

  *Student* = student OR learner
• Look for the possibility of phrase searching with quotation marks

“time management” OR “time-management” OR “managing the time” (see the better solution below)

“graduate student” OR “phd student” OR “master* student” (see the better solution below)

• Look for the possibility of using NEAR/x operator:

• Time NEAR/1 management
  (This will be equal to: time management OR time-management OR management of time)

• (graduate OR masters OR phd) NEAR/1 (students OR learners)

• Look for the possibility of using “NOT”

NOT “high school” NOT undergraduate

• Look for the possibility of hyphenation

  time-management - but we solved this by using NEAR
• Join the key concepts with AND or NEAR/x and synonyms of key concepts with OR in a parantheses. Use nested parantheses if necessary. Join the excluded concepts with NOT.

(guides OR guidelines OR hints OR OR tricks OR methods OR ways OR advices)
AND (effective OR efficient OR fruitful OR productive)
AND (time NEAR/1 management)
AND ((graduat OR master OR phd) NEAR/1 (students OR learners))
NOT “high school”
NOT undergraduate

• Check for the presence reserved words like the, in, on, and, with, of, etc., in your keywords except for phrase searching. Eliminate if any.

The guides for an effective time.....

• Check for the spelling mistakes / syntax errors (like missing parantheses etc.,) in the keywords you typed (doing a trial search will help)

(guides OR guidelines OR hints OR OR tricks OR methods OR ways OR advices)
AND (effective OR efficient OR fruitful OR productive)
AND (time NEAR/1 management)
AND ((graduat OR master OR phd) NEAR/1 (students OR learners))
NOT “high school”
NOT undergraduate

• Truncate your keywords with wild cards, especially with*

(guide* OR guidelines OR hint* OR trick* OR method* OR way* OR advice*)
AND (effective* OR efficien* OR fruitful* OR productive*)
AND (time NEAR/1 manag*)
AND ((graduat* OR master* OR phd) NEAR/1 (student* OR learner))
NOT “high school”
NOT undergraduate
(guides OR guidelines OR hints OR OR tricks OR methods OR ways OR advices) AND (effective OR efficient OR fruitful OR productive) AND (time NEAR/1 management) AND ((graduat OR master OR phd) NEAR/1 (students OR learners)) NOT “high school” NOT undergraduate

• Do your search.

• Select a representative article, and examine its abstract and keywords section for the possibility of additional keywords.