Use Key Words Effectively for an Internet Search

1. Focus

Explain Using Key Words to Search the Internet

Say: We know there is a lot of information on the Internet. So how do we find useful information that we can use in our reports? Many of you are probably familiar with search engines, such as Google and Yahoo. Plus there are other search engines that are dedicated to helping kids search, such as Sweet Search, Fact Monster, and Ask Kids. Once you go to a search engine’s website, you will type in key words to search for information on your topic. Today we’re going to practice using key words effectively.

Model Using Key Words Effectively

If you are using the interactive whiteboard resources, display a search engine’s home page or arrange for students to view a computer monitor with a search engine’s home page displayed.

Sample Think-Aloud

Say: I’m going to write a report on the angelfish, a really cool fish that lives in ocean reefs. I type the word angelfish into the search engine. And what comes up? Wow. A lot. And some of it has nothing to do with fish. It looks like “Angelfish” is the name of a company. Also, as I scroll down and read the summaries, I see that there are both freshwater and marine angelfish. I’m not interested in the freshwater angelfish. So I’m going to revise my search, and type in different key words. This time I’ll type marine angelfish. This is better; this shows me sites with specific information that I can use for my reports.

Here are some things to remember when you use key words to search for information on the Internet:

1. First, define what you are looking for as completely as possible. Also, think about what you’re not looking for so you can easily rule out unhelpful sites.

2. Use specific key words. For example, say you’re looking for information about the Bill of Rights. If you typed in Bill, the search engine would return all the sites that have the word bill or name Bill in them.

3. Don’t use small words, such as a, an, to, the, and be.

4. Check to make sure you’ve spelled the key words correctly.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Learn how to use key words effectively for an Internet search.
• Practice using key words effectively during an Internet search.
• Discuss the strategy and how they can apply it to their independent writing and research.

Preparation

Materials Needed
• Chart paper and markers
• Citing Sources (BLM 4)
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

Make copies of BLM 4 for your class. Gather together a book, a magazine, a newspaper, and a page printed from the Internet to show students where to find the information they need to correctly cite their sources. Identify a series of key words students may use in the Practice section of this lesson to avoid objectionable search results.

Teacher Tip

You may want to extend this mini-lesson to model or review with students how to cite their sources. Citing Sources (BLM 4) provides models of how to cite different types of sources in a bibliography.
5. When the search engine produces its results, scroll down the page and read the summaries of the various sites. The source at the top of the page isn’t necessarily the best one.


2. Rehearse

**Practice Using Key Words Effectively**

Provide small groups of students workstations with computers where they can practice searching for information using a key word. You may also want to conduct this practice on the whiteboard with the whole class. **Note:** Before the lesson, choose a search engine and acceptable key words (for example, whale; beluga whale; beluga whale habitat) to use to ensure the search results will not contain objectionable content.

**Share Ideas**

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share their experience using the key words. **Ask:** Did you find useful information? Did you find information that was not useful? What kind? How did changing the key words change the sources the search engine found? Ask students to discuss how they can apply this strategy to their independent research.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** Today we learned about using key words effectively to search for information on the Internet. We learned that we need to know what we’re looking for and be specific with the words we use. If the first search doesn’t give us the information we need, we can revise the key words and search again.

Encourage students to use key words as they do their research during independent writing time. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite students to share key words they used to find information on the website. If students need guidance, suggest revised key words for another search.

---

**Strategies to Support ELs**

**Beginning**

Work one on one with ELs to help them identify and use key words to look for information, while other students write independently.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Pair ELs with more fluent English speakers during the partner activity.