



MicroModule: synonyms

What Are Synonyms?

REVIEW Page

Below is the entire module on one page.



How Can Using Synonyms Help Your Search?

If your first search query doesn't retrieve what you are looking for, consider finding new keywords to describe the same concept. One way to do this is to think of synonyms for the terms in your query. Synonyms are words that have the same or nearly the same meaning. Synonyms for *search* would be seek, look, hunt, or quest. Each word might mean the same thing, but there are also shades of meaning that make the word more specific. You can use these shades of meaning to focus your query.

Search engines determine relevancy by matching the keywords in your search query with words that appear in the documents they have indexed. The matching is completely mechanical: the words must match exactly. That means your keywords must exactly match the words in the documents you are after. By carefully selecting the best synonyms for your keywords, you can improve your chances that a search engine will find just what you are looking for.

One of the best ways to find synonyms is to look in the documents returned by the first query. In writing about their subjects, authors often use professional vocabulary that can provide synonyms for keywords. Additionally, some search engines will provide a list of words related to your search query along with the results of your search.

Another way to find strong synonyms is to use a thesaurus. Rather than rely on your working vocabulary, consult an online or traditional thesaurus to create your keyword list. Using a thesaurus may spark the insight that leads to the perfect keywords for your search. English is an intricate language with many subtleties. Words will always have nuances that are difficult for computers to prioritize. Having a strategy for generating a list of keyword synonyms will sharpen your search skills and improve your results.

For more in-depth information about other kinds of nyms see the IMSA Micro Modules:

- What Are Hyponyms, and Hypernyms?
- How Can Various Nyms Help You Focus A Search?

What is a synonym?

A synonym is one of two or more words, which have very nearly the same meaning. Synonyms can usually be used interchangeably.



How can understanding synonyms empower my search?

Knowledge of synonyms will help you form an effective query. Part of any good search strategy is the careful selection of keywords. Using synonyms as a strategy for generating keywords helps you more precisely describe your topic. Precise queries will return more relevant results.

How can a thesaurus help when I form queries? Many searchers use a thesaurus (traditional or online) to generate an initial keyword list of synonyms. By using a thesaurus, you will often find new meanings that simply wouldn't have occurred to you otherwise. There are a number of well-designed online systems that will help you plumb the depths of a word's meaning.

- The IMSA Thesaurus tool (<http://21cif.imsa.edu/nym>) prompts you to browse through word meanings as you look for the right keywords.
- Thesaurus.com (<http://thesaurus.reference.com>) has an online thesaurus that offers in-depth suggestions, classified by concept. The site has many language tools including a dictionary, language translator, and a dictionary toolbar.
- Plumb Design offers a unique online Visual Thesaurus that prompts the user to work in 3-dimensions as they explore word meanings. (<http://www.visualthesaurus.com/online/index.html>)

How can I quickly find synonyms as I search?

One of the best ways to find synonyms is to look in the documents returned by your first query. Pay attention to an author's use of professional vocabulary. You may see words that more precisely describe just what you are looking for. Also some search engines will refine your query by suggesting alternate keywords along with the results of your search.

TEOMASM [Search Tips](#)

Synonyms are where you fined them! Find this phrase

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Authored by Dennis O'Connor 2003-2004



[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4]

End of Micromodule - synonyms. *Return to Micromodule [List](#)*