



The Thinking Tool provides a template for focusing a research assignment through the brainstorming of ideas, keywords, and other terminology related to a topic. The objective is the generation of searchable keywords that may be used to gather resources.

Directions:

Print a copy of the Thinking Tool and follow the numbered boxes. Need help? Feel free to use [Ask a Librarian](#) and we'll be happy to assist!

Instructors:

The Thinking Tool is a helpful addition to Collab when paired with a research-based assignment. It is also an effective individual or group activity in a class session geared towards information discovery.

The Thinking Tool was created by Meridith Wolnick (maw2tj@virginia.edu), UVA Library Director of Teaching & Learning, and Todd Burks (infoman@virginia.edu), Teaching & Learning Librarian. They welcome your questions and comments.

Thinking Tool: Choosing a Topic and Search Terms

1

What is your assignment?

How long is your paper? How many sources do you need? What kind?

2

What do you want to write about?

This doesn't have to be your final choice of topic. It's a place to start.

3

Synonyms?
Words experts use?
Related topics?

Concept Cloud

Write down anything related to your main idea. Anything! Everything!
(Use Wikipedia for help here).

People?
Kinds of people?
Organizations?



Main Idea from Box 2

Places?

Dates?

4

Your search terms:

2-4 keywords from box 3.

Remember: Add or subtract keywords to get different results. Pick different ones! Start with a new main idea!