



21st Century Information Fluency Project

IMSA Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy



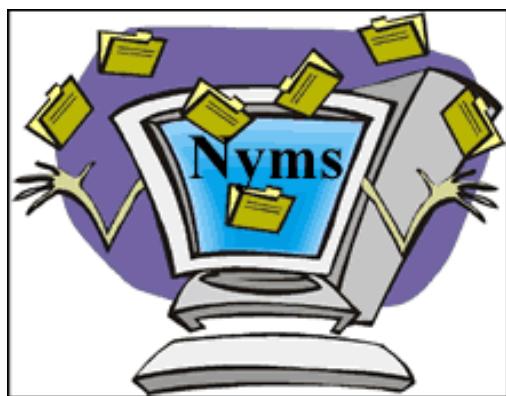
MicroModule: hypernyms

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

REVIEW Page

Below is the entire module on one page.

When striving to name a concept with great precision, it helps to understand synonyms, hypernyms and hyponyms. Knowing how to apply these nym will sharpen your search skills and enhance your keyword formation. The root "nym" comes from the Greek *onoma*, a name. We use the term nym to identify many classes of words. In this module we will look at two specific nym: hypernyms, and hyponyms. (For more about synonyms, see the IMSA Micro Module: What Are Synonyms? How Can Using Synonyms Help Your Search?)



We are all familiar with synonyms: words that mean the same thing. The first step in creating a list of keywords is to write down all of the synonyms that describe the topic of your search. You should consider using an online or traditional thesaurus as you create your keyword list. It is also wise to scan the results of your first search for strong keywords. Synonyms (or any keyword) act as either *hyponyms* or *hypernyms*. What are hypernyms and hyponyms? How can understanding and using these specialized nym help you focus a search?

Hyponym

A *hyponym* is a word that describes things more specifically. Proper nouns are good examples of hyponyms. Niagara Falls is a hyponym for the concept of waterfall. Ford is a hyponym for the concept car. Just as a *hypodermic* needle ends with a very fine point, *hyponyms* are words that pointedly focus your search. Keywords that are *hyponyms* will retrieve fewer and more precise results. For this reason, hyponyms narrow a search.

Hypernym

Hypernyms are words that refer to broad categories or general concepts. Car or airplane are *hypernyms* for more precise terms like Toyota Camry, or Boeing 747. If you are not getting enough results you can broaden your search by using *hypernyms*.

English is an intricate language with many subtleties. Words will always have shades of meaning that are difficult for computers to prioritize. A careful application of nyms can help any search engine find just what you are looking for.

For more information about other lesser known nyms see the IMSA Micro Module: How Can Various Nyms Help You Focus A Search?

Puzzled by Nyms?



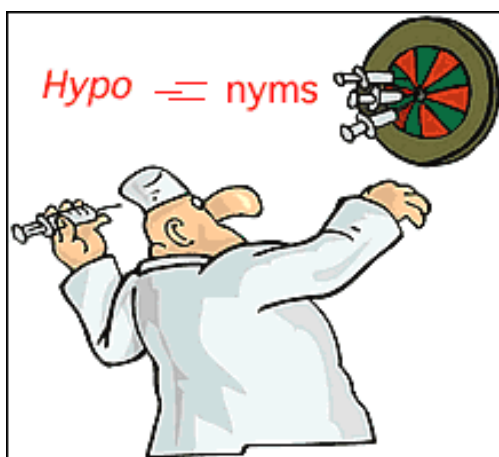
What are Nyms?

The root "nym" comes from the Greek *onoma*, a name. We use the term nym to identify many classes of words. When an Internet searcher speaks of "nyms" they are generally referring to sets of words that improve query formation by providing precise control over keyword selection.

How can understanding nyms empower my search?

Part of any good search strategy is the careful selection of keywords. Understanding how *hypernyms* and *hyponyms* will affect your search puts real power into your hands. As you build a query, be aware that use of nyms will narrow or broaden your search. This knowledge helps you form an effective query.

How can I use Hyponyms to Improve My Search?



Hyponyms are more specific names that identify your topic. Often *hyponyms* are proper nouns such as Ford, Chevrolet, or Toyota.

Using *hyponyms* will narrow a search and retrieve more specific results. In general this is just what you want to do. As you generate keywords, always be thinking of *hyponyms* you might use to get better specific results.

Hyponyms narrow your search to a fine point - like the point of a *hypodermic needle*.

How can I use Hypernyms to Improve My Search?

Hypernyms are general or broad terms, such car, truck, or automobile. Using *hypernyms* will widen the results of a search. If you're not getting sufficient results from your current keyword, expand the meaning of the keyword by

using a hypernym. *Hypernyms will broaden your search.*

The screenshot shows a search engine interface with the following elements:

- TEOMA logo and search bar containing the text "lakes".
- Search Tips, Search button, and links for Advanced Search and Preferences.
- Results section with the text "Relevant web pages" and "Showing 1-10 of about 3,239,000:". A red annotation "Hypernyms broaden the search" points to the search bar.
- Search results including "U.S. EPA - GLNPO, Visualizing the Great Lakes" and "Great Lakes Atlas - 3rd Edition". A red annotation "Hyponyms narrow the search" points to the first result.
- A "Refine" section with the text "Suggestions to narrow your search" and a list of hypernyms: Great Lakes, Mammoth Lakes, Finger Lakes, Lakes Bathymetry Data, Detroit Lakes, and Bellarmine University. This list is circled in red.

Authored by Dennis O'Connor 2003-2004



1 2 3 [4]

End of Micromodule - hypernyms.

Return to Micromodule [List](#)