Search Term Detective

Choose words that lead to useful sources

7.W.8.a "Use search terms effectively."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the words in the revised rooftop-garden search that name the setting and the effect, then circle two details about the turtle-lighting problem that could narrow a search.

From a Big Search to a Useful One

1. When our class newspaper asked whether rooftop gardens cool buildings, I tried searching "plants." The results mixed houseplant care, plant cells, and garden stores. I rewrote my search as "rooftop gardens building temperature," keeping the main place and the effect I wanted to study. To look for measurements rather than decorating tips, I added "study" and "summer." Useful search terms act like directions: they name the subject, the question, and sometimes the kind of evidence needed. Extra words help only when they make the question clearer.

2. Next, our newspaper investigated a different problem: sea turtle hatchlings on a nesting beach. After hatching, these young turtles usually move toward the brighter, open horizon over the ocean. Artificial lights near shore can draw them away from the water. The reporter wanted to learn why a lit parking lot might confuse hatchlings, not how adult turtles migrate. A search about "turtles" alone would bring back many unrelated pages. Using "hatchlings" instead of "baby turtles" gives the search a more precise science term.

3. The class also wanted practical advice for a beach in Clearwater, Florida. The reporter planned to look for ways to shield outdoor lamps so less light reaches the sand. For local rules, she needed information about Clearwater, not a general article about every beach. She also knew that a page about daytime beach cleanup would not answer a question about lighting at night. A search can change as a writer moves from asking why something happens to finding solutions and checking local guidance.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. The reporter wants to learn why hatchlings might head toward the lit parking lot. Write a search using at least three useful terms.

2. The reporter needs ways to keep outdoor lamps from shining on the nesting beach. Write a focused search for that solution.

3. The reporter needs lighting rules for the beach in Clearwater, Florida. Write a search that limits results to that place.

4. The reporter wants evidence about how lights affect hatchlings, not beach travel advice. Write a search that could help find evidence, and explain one term you chose.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a question about a topic other than rooftop gardens or sea turtles. Write a broad search and two improved searches that target different parts of your question, then explain in one sentence how each improved search helps.

ANSWER KEY

Search Term Detective

GRADE 7 · 7.W.8.a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the words in the revised rooftop-garden search that name the setting and the effect, then circle two details about the turtle-lighting problem that could narrow a search. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	The reporter wants to learn why hatchlings might head toward the lit parking lot. Write a search using at least three useful terms.	**sea turtle hatchlings parking lot lights ocean**
2	The reporter needs ways to keep outdoor lamps from shining on the nesting beach. Write a focused search for that solution.	**shield outdoor lamps sea turtle nesting beach**
3	The reporter needs lighting rules for the beach in Clearwater, Florida. Write a search that limits results to that place.	**Clearwater Florida sea turtle beach lighting rules**
4	The reporter wants evidence about how lights affect hatchlings, not beach travel advice. Write a search that could help find evidence, and explain one term you chose.	**sea turtle hatchlings artificial light study. Adding "study" helps target research rather than travel advice.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Question: What causes food waste in school cafeterias, and how can schools reduce it?
Broad search: food waste
Improved search 1: school cafeteria food waste causes. This targets reasons food gets thrown away at school.
Improved search 2: school cafeteria food waste reduction strategies. This targets possible solutions instead of causes.

Accept varied search strings that include terms suited to the stated purpose. For Part 3, the two revisions should narrow the broad search in meaningfully different ways.