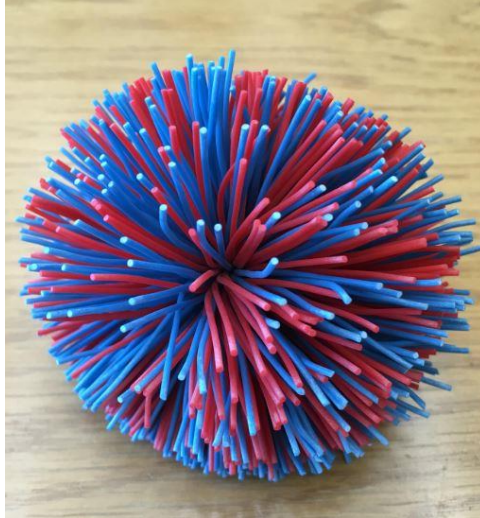


What is this thing? Koosh balls and search terms



Materials:

1 (or more) Koosh balls
Paper
Pens/pencils
Computers with internet access

Activity:

Pass around a Koosh ball and ask students to write down as many words as they can think of to describe it. In my experience, students are unfamiliar with the brand name; however, it is a good idea to remind them not to shout out its name or purpose. Have them spend a few minutes writing. What does it look like? What is it made of? What is it used for?

Next, tell the students they need to find the item on Amazon.com. Ask them to raise their hands once they have found it. Move around and see if it is the same thing or not – if not, have them keep searching.

For those students that were successful, ask them to share the search terms they used. In most cases, different students will have used different terms successfully - I like to highlight this point. Ask - Why do some search terms work and others do not?

Then pull up the US Patent for the koosh ball:

<https://patents.google.com/patent/US4756529A/en>

Did anyone brainstorm any of the words in the patent title? “*Generally spherical object with floppy filaments to promote sure capture.*” Use this example to demonstrate how different databases speak different languages.

Spend a few minutes discussing how successful search terms will “speak the same language” of the chosen database. Point out how we may need to use language that is technical, legal, medical, scientific, historical, slang, regional, etc. to find the information we need.