Tags versus search phrases

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One of our most frequently asked questions is what is the difference between tags and search phrases. While they appear similar, they perform different functions.

Tags are used for secondary navigation

Think of tags as an alternate form of navigation or organization, separate from your categories. Tags display in full search results and can add a layer of additional context to readers trying to decide which resource they most want.

- Categories and tags are both used for organization and navigation.
- Tags are added to articles to describe what the content is and what it relates to, and articles are put into categories for the same purpose.
- Both are visible to the reader.
- Neither are indexed for search but they display in the search results to provide additional context.
- Readers can select tags or categories in search results to navigate to a list of their articles.
- Tags have their own form of search: **Tag search**.

Tag example

You might have a `troubleshooting` tag which tells you and the reader that (a) this article is about troubleshooting and (b) there are probably other articles which are about troubleshooting as well. By selecting the tag, the reader can navigate to a list of all articles with the tag `troubleshooting`.

You can pull up a list of all articles with a tag by doing a **Tag search**. The syntax to return a list of articles with a tag is `:tag name`. This tells the search to skip the normal search and return a list of all articles with the specified tag. Entering `:troubleshooting` as your search would return all articles with the `troubleshooting` tag.

Search phrases are like keywords

KnowledgeOwl automatically indexes many article fields for search, including the body of your article.

So you don't have to add search phrases to get things to show up.

But you can add search phrases if you want to add keywords that don't appear in the article or to make an article return higher in the search results. Refer to **Use search phrases** for more information on search phrases.

Search phrases aren't displayed to readers, but they are used to return search results.

Search phrase example

Linus has an article on troubleshooting computer errors. Many computer errors stem from one of the computer "death" screens, where the screen locks and you can't do anything.

If you're on a Windows computer, this is often called the `blue screen of death` .

If you're on a Mac, this is often called the `spinning beachball (or pizza) of death` .

Linus's troubleshooting article doesn't explicitly include any of these phrases. He doesn't want to have them in there, cluttering up the actual troubleshooting steps.

Instead, he can add each "of death" phrase as a search phrase. This helps guarantee his readers will get the troubleshooting page they most need without him having to include "spinning pizza of death" in his troubleshooting article.