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 like categories

- Categories and tags are used for organization and navigation.
- Tags are added to articles 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 click on tags or categories in search results to navigate to a list of related articles.

Tag example

You might have a tag called "troubleshooting" 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 clicking on the tag, the reader can navigate to a list of all articles with the tag "troubleshooting".

You can manually pull up a list of all articles with a tag using the 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. Putting ":troubleshooting" into search would return all articles with the tag "troubleshooting".

Search phrases are like keywords

- Keywords and search phrases are tools to find things using a search engine.
- Both are part of the content and indexed for search.
- Neither keywords or search phrases are visible to the reader.

Search phrase example

Maybe you have an article on troubleshooting computer errors. If you have a Windows computer, you might be familiar with the "blue screen of death". If you are on a Mac, you might be familiar with the equivalent "spinning beachball of death" or one of its variations.

When someone types in one of the colorful variations of these problems, you want this article to come up but you may not want to add all these "of death" variations to your visible content. This is the perfect time to use search phrases.

You can add all the variations of the error as search phrases, which are hidden from the reader but get indexed for

search. This way, the next time someone types "spinning pizza of death" or its acronym "SPOD" into search, your article on troubleshooting computer errors will appear.