To review, associative relationships are between headings that are not synonymous nor are they hierarchical – that is, they are not UFs or BTs – but they are intrinsically connected in some other way. In LCSH, headings that have an associative relationship are called Related Terms and are notated RT.

In this module, we will discuss the general rules for RTs in LCSH, which are contained in *Subject Headings Manual* instruction sheet H 370. As you will see, the rules are very restrictive and very few RTs are currently being added to LCSH.
In order to be RTs, headings have to be so closely associated with each other that people automatically think of one when they think of the other.

In this example, if we were to say Students to a group of people and ask what that brought to mind, most of them would probably say Education. You cannot have one without the other.

In the same way, if we said Education, most people would say that they immediately think of Students.

For this reason, RT references are reciprocal.

Look up Education and you will see Students; look up Students, and you will see a reference for Education.
Until 1985, the rules for making RTs – or SEE ALSO references, as they were called at the time – were very permissive, and relied heavily on cataloger judgment. If one heading was even occasionally associated with another, a reference was made. This policy caused a lot of problems.

My favorite example is one that Mary Kay Pietris, a chief of the former Subject Cataloging Division at LC, told me about. Apparently there was a prolonged debate over whether the headings Swimming and Lakes should be RTs, because people often swim in lakes. Would Swimming then also have to be an RT to the headings for oceans and swimming pools, and any other place where people might possibly swim?

The rules we use today were instituted in 1985, and those rules were intended to reduce the complexity of LCSH and make it easier to maintain. In the decades since the rule change, though, there has not been time to systematically review all of the existing RTs, so you will see many that do not follow the rules we are going to discuss in this module. Some of those RTs may be of use to you as you catalog, so feel free to use them or ignore them on a case-by-case basis.

Now let’s discuss the rules as they exist today.
The rules for making RTs begin with a list of prohibitions.

- First, headings that begin with the same word or word stem cannot be RTs.
Nursing and Nurses begin with the stem N-u-r-s, so they cannot be RTs.

Public librarians and Public libraries cannot be RTs, either, because they both begin with the word Public.

The theory is that in a browse index, or a card catalog, the entries for Nurses and Nursing, and Public librarians and Public libraries are close to each other alphabetically, making the RT unnecessary.

As with so many things, there is an exception to this rule.
Headings that are at the top of the hierarchy within a discipline can be linked as RTs.

**Libraries** and **Librarians** can therefore be RTs of each other.
Second, headings cannot be RTs if they have a common broader term.

This is true even when the headings are very closely associated with each other.
For example, the headings **Gynecologists** and **Obstetricians** cannot be related terms, even though in the United States women often go to an ob/gyn, which is someone who specializes in both.
Both **Gynecologists** and **Obstetricians** have the BT **Physicians**.

The idea is that headings are brought together through their BT, so an RT is not necessary.
There is an exception to this rule, too.

Sometimes words are so closely associated with each other that they are used almost as synonyms, even though they are actually separate concepts.

If that happens, the headings can be RTs, even if they have the same BT.
Since many people refer to rugs when they mean carpets, and vice versa, those headings can be RTs even though they have two BTs in common: **Floor coverings** and **Textile fabrics**.

So what makes this situation different from **Gynecologists** and **Obstetricians**?

**Gynecology** and **Obstetrics** are different specialties and are not referred to interchangeably.

They are associated for American audiences only because so many obstetricians are also gynecologists.
Third, RTs cannot be made if headings higher in their respective hierarchies are already RTs of each other.
An example is definitely needed to explain this prohibition!

**Animals** and **Human-animal relationships** are RTs of each other. As you can see, **Human-animal relationships** also has an NT, **Human-bear encounters**.
This entry shows the reciprocal RT relationship of Animals and Human-animal encounters.

Animals has an NT Predatory animals, which has an NT Carnivora, which has an NT Bears. So, obviously, Bears is in the Animals hierarchy.
Bears and Human-bear encounters cannot, therefore, be RTs because Human-animal relationships and Animals are already RTs.
So when *can* RTs be made?

There are again three situations, but each of them has to be tested against the prohibitions that we just covered.

In other words, potential RTs that seem to be allowed according to the rules we are about to discuss, still have to be checked to see if they fall into one of the prohibited categories that we’ve already discussed. If they do, then the headings cannot be RTs after all.
RTs can be made if the headings have meanings that overlap, or that are used interchangeably.

The words **Boats** and **Ships** are often used interchangeably by the general population, so they can be RTs.
RTs can also be made in order to link a discipline and an object studied.

Ornithology is the study of birds, for example.
Finally, RTs can be made to link persons with their field of endeavor, for example *Physicians* and *Medicine*.

But note that the name for the people in a particular field and the name of the field itself often begin with the same word or word stem, so this type of RT does not occur very often.