

SEARCH ENGINE FACTS, TIPS AND TRICKS

Where can I link to a listing of Search Engines from the Library's Home Page?

Go to the Somerset County Library System Home Page (www.somerset.lib.nj.us)

Click on ONLINE Resources then Search Engines link.

What is a Search Engine?

A search engine is a software program connected to the Web through your Internet Service Provider (ISP). It can include up to three of the following components on its website. 1.) A query function that searches a database of web sites for specific words or phrases and then retrieves a list of sites that match your words or phrases. This is usually accomplished by typing into a textbox or search field located within the search engine. 2.) A directory of topics that can be selected by clicking on the link and following subsequent links to find the information you are searching for. 3.) A subject specialist or guide hosted on the website who has posted websites together on a specific topic.

- Search engines are free
- There are 20-30 major search engines
- There are over 4 billion Web pages but the largest search engines only cover 3.5 billion sites. No single search engine can search the entire Web at one time.
- Using search engines is an art, not a science. It takes time and practice with different search engines to know which one is best for your search.

What are some examples of the type of searches powered by Search Engines?

Search Engine Query: A robot or spider (computer program) that automatically crawls the websites and their links registered with that search engine. The key words that you type into the textbox, will capture those words on every page crawled. The search will result in a list of "hits" or web sites that contain those specific word(s). Search engines such as Google (www.google.com), Lycos (www.lycos.com), and Ask Jeeves (www.askjeeves.com) are examples of engines that are simplified to provide basic key word searches.

Please review Google: The Basics of Google Search

For Example

Try this keyword search for the history of St. Patrick's Day

Type in or link to Google (www.google.com)

In the textbox type in 'St. Patrick's Day history'

Click on the site that reads History Channel

Click on 'History of the Holiday'

Directory Search: A searchable collection of sites, listed manually by human editors. Yahoo (www.yahoo.com) and Looksmart (www.looksmart.com) are search engines that Provide examples of directories. Remember to scan all the topics in the directory before you begin your search to determine which subject heading most closely matches your topic.

For example

Try this directory search for websites on gardening.

Type in www.yahoo.com

Click on Recreation & Sports

Click on Hobbies

Click on Gardening

Scroll down the page for recommended websites on gardening

Portal Searches: A search engine feature that offers an entrance or doorway to other benefits of the Internet that include personalizing the site for your own specific interests, free e-mail, chats, forums, classified ads, search engine queries, and directories. What differentiates them the most from other search engines are their subject guides. These guides are people appointed by the engine to collect and post websites together on a specific topic. There are usually links to info about the guide such as, why they are considered an expert and their email address. Examples of portals include About.com and Lycos (www.lycos.com). Lycos is a great place to survey what other people are searching for on the Internet.

For example

Try this search for tips about decorating Easter eggs

Type in www.about.com

Type in the text box 'Easter Eggs'

Click on the first site under 'On the About Network', [Easter Eggs](#)

Click on [Easter Egg Coloring and Decorating](#)

Take note of the About.com guide listed at the top of the page

How can I do an advanced search?

The examples above demonstrate basic search engine strategies for a simple search. Advanced searches can be done in two different ways. The first way is to make use of the search engines advanced search link.

Suppose, for example, you wanted to find out what happened to the Faberge Eggs after the death of the Russian Romanov clan.

Go to Google by typing (www.google.com) or linking from the library's homepage

Click on Advanced Search

Type in 'with all the words' search field 'faberge eggs'

Type in 'with at least one of the words' search field 'fate'

Click on Google Search

Click on the first site Faberge Eggs – The fate of the eggs sponsored by pbs.org

For another example, find out the original publication date of the book “The Easter Bunny That Overslept”

Go to Yahoo! by typing in www.yahoo.com or linking from the library's homepage

Click on Advanced

In the search field 'all of these words' type in 'original copyright'

In the 'exact phrase' field type in 'the easter bunny that overslept'

Click on the first site [Children's Corner Bunny Tales Abound for Easter](#)

Scroll down the page until you find the paragraph detailing the story and listing the copyright date.

What is Search Engine Math?

The second way to do an advanced search is to use search engine math, also known as Boolean Searching. This is a process by which logical relationships among search terms are created. The information searcher uses terms to create a relationship between the search key words (AND, OR, NOT), uses quotes around phrases, or uses + or – symbols to add or subtract words.

Search Engine Math or Boolean Terms at a Glance

AND or + matches all the words or phrases entered (most of the sites recognize +word)

OR matches any of the words or phrases

NOT or – avoids specified words or phrases (most search sites recognize – word)

“ ” around a group of words designates them as an exact phrase to be matched.

* serves as a wildcard for multiple letters (for example attract* would direct the site to search for attract or attraction or attractive)

% serves as a wildcard for a single letter (for example, wom%n would match woman or women)

Beginner Search Tips

- 1.) Be specific – The most common search pitfall is searching too broadly. String together all the search terms that are relevant to your question. If you want a home remedy for dandruff, type home remedy dandruff to find it. Add words such as introduction or tutorial to a search if you’re looking for “how-to” information.
- 2.) Use exact phrases – Use quotation marks around two words to limit your search to the exact phrase. Some search engines look for the exact phrase first, but using quotation marks can limit it further. Putting quotes around “bluegrass history” in Google, for example, cut the number of results from 105,000 to 271.
- 3.) Direct your search – Google will usually ignore the word or, but if you use it in all caps, it will help broaden your search in a particular direction. Type vacation Bermuda OR Bahamas – for example – to find vacation information about either of the two islands.
- 4.) Include common words – Most search engines omit common words such as and, with, from their search results. If you want to put them back in, many search engines recognize the plus sign as a delimiter. To find pages with the exact phrase night and day – for example – type “night +and day”
- 5.) Try guessing at the web address of a well-known organization Web addresses of established organizations generally follow this convention: (though not always). A searcher may guess at the address by adding www to the prefix, or use the address structure when scanning the results of a hit list to determine the contents of a site.

.com – Business/Commerce site

.gov – U.S. Government sites

.edu – Colleges/Universities

.org – Non-profit Organizations

Examples:

Pepsi = www.pepsi.com

Fidelity Investing = www.fidelity.com

The Whitehouse = www.whitehouse.gov

IRS = www.irs.gov

Rutgers University = www.rutgers.edu

AARP = www.aarp.org

What are some sample advanced searches using Search Engine Math?

Please review the Google: How to Interpret your Search Results page
Please review the Google: Advanced Search Made Easy page

Where can I find a reliable website that provides the biography of George Washington?

Go to the Google search engine (www.google.com)

Type in 'george washington'

The first site that appears covers George Washington University – not our intended result

Next type in 'george washington –university'

The first site that appears covers George Washington's Mt. Vernon, still not our intended result

Next type in 'george washington – university +biography'

Click on the first site [Biography of George Washington](#)

Say we wanted a biography of George Washington from an encyclopedia, to do this add +encyclopedia to your search string

Click on the site Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia: George Washington

Is it true that George Washington really had wooden teeth or were they made out of animal teeth and ivory?

Type into the Google search field 'george washington +teeth +wooden OR animal OR ivory'

Our first search result returns websites that include books about his teeth which was not our intended result.

Refine the search by adding '-books' at the end

Click on any of the sites in your results list

Are there any search engines that will search several engines at one time?

Yes, go to what is called a Meta Search Engine

- Go to the library's homepage (www.somerset.lib.nj.us)
- Click on 'more search engine sites'
- Click on any of these four search engines listed under "Meta Sites"
- Dogpile
- Genius Find
- Profusion
- Search.com

Where can I go for further education and help for refining my searches?

Help Screens

Check the help screen link listed on most search engines

Tutorials

Search engine tutorials linked to the library's homepage

Go to: Web Resources

 Web Sites by Subject

 Learn the Web

Search Engine Watch

searchenginewatch.com - an authoritative guide to searching the Web using Search Engines

Other searches you might want to try:

Compare searches in Google and other search engines. Try these as query searches (Google), directory searches (Yahoo), or portal searches (About.com)

1.) You want to try building a new garden walkway as a spring project, try formulating key words to use for your search, or drill down through a search engine directory.

2.) What types of flowers would you plant to attract birds or butterflies to your garden?

3.) What is the earliest time you can set out tomato plants in New Jersey?

4.) How can you prevent ants from invading your home once the weather gets warmer?

5.) Where can I find designs and building instructions for an outdoor shed?

6.) What illnesses did George Washington have in his lifetime?