



Improve Your Google Search Tip Sheet

Google has become synonymous with searching for information. More than 50% of all Internet searches are conducted using *Google*. Learning to ‘think behind the box’ and understand how it works will improve your search results.

When you enter key words, *Google*, generates search results based on a secret known as PageRank ©.

When you enter search terms *Google*,

- Finds all the pages that contain the words you have entered. The count is listed in the upper right of the results screen. (Just for fun—and to get an idea of the web content in English--enter the word “the”.)
- Analyzes which pages are most likely to have what you are looking for, considering the number of times the words appear on page, whether they are in the title and how close the words are together.
- Considers the sites that link to the pages. Links from popular sites get more points and will rank higher on the list.
- Suggests alternatives for misspelled words. (Sometimes you find out how many other people are bad spellers.)

Often *Google* will retrieve exactly what you want—if you use the right key words--sometimes you will need to work a little harder.

Remember:

- It can take up to six weeks for *Google* to “crawl” the web. If you want breaking news, use the *Google News* feature. You also may not find the most recent version of a page.
- New pages will not rank high in a list because no one has linked to them yet.
- *Google* does not find documents in most databases (A collection of data arranged for ease and speed of search and retrieval) such as those provided by the *Electronic Library for Minnesota*, available from your school library page or <http://www.elm4you.org/>
- *Google* sometimes provides links that refine the search. (Example: *ovarian cancer* Suggested options are treatment, symptoms, for patients, for health professionals, etc.)

Search tips

Phrase searching: Enclose a phrase in quotation marks to find words in an exact order. This is useful if you forgot where you found a quote or to detect plagiarism.

Excluding words: Precede the word to be excluded with a – sign. If you are looking for Vikings from Scandinavia and not the football team, enter Vikings –Football.

Word order can affect a search. Place the words in the order they would most likely occur in a source.

Adding a ~ in front of a word finds synonyms. For example ~inexpensive finds inexpensive, cheap, low-cost, and affordable.

Advanced search page: Click the link to *advanced search* in order to find options to search only in titles, for particular file types (a *PowerPoint* for your next lecture) to change search options.

Understanding the results list

Sponsored links: Always look for the “Sponsored Links”. This is paid advertising, not the results of the PageRank. Sponsored links that appear above the results list are highlighted in pastel colors.)

Anatomy of an item on the search results list:



Google offers much more than one search box

- *Image searches:* Find images on any topic. Beware; this is not filtered unless you select SafeSearch in preferences.
- *News searches:* Use *Google News* to find up-to-the minute news.
- *Directory searches:* *Google* directory is based on *Open Directory Project*. <http://dmoz.org/>. Volunteers select web sites arranged under categories. (Results may be out-of-date.)
- *Calculator:* Enter an equation such as 23 + 1048 and *Google* will calculate the answer.
- *Dictionary:* Enter “define:” in front of a word and *Google* retrieves definitions from various web sites.
- *Google Docs* provides an online word processor. Documents can be shared with anyone and accessed from anywhere. *Google Notebook* can be used to enter, categorize and sort notes.
- Set up an *iGoogle* account and manage all your *Google* resources and RSS feeds in one convenient location. To learn more, google iGoogle. ☺

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