



Effective Searching with “The Google”

Background: President Bush and [”The Google”](#)

The Essentials of Google Search

Doing a search on Google is easy. Simply type one or more search terms (the words or phrase that best describe the information you want to find) into the search box and hit the 'Enter' key or click on the Google Search button. In response, Google produces a results page: a list of web pages related to your search terms, with the most relevant page appearing first, then the next, and so on.

Here are some basic tips to help you maximize the effectiveness of your search:

Choosing Search Terms

Choosing the right search terms is the key to finding the information you need. Start with the obvious – if you're looking for general information on Hawaii, try *Hawaii*. But it's often advisable to use multiple search terms; if you're planning a Hawaiian vacation, you'll do better with *vacation Hawaii* than with either *vacation* or *Hawaii* by themselves. And *vacation Hawaii golf* may produce even better (or, depending on your perspective, worse) results.

You might also ask yourself if your search terms are sufficiently specific. It's better to search on *luxury hotels Maui* than on *tropical island hotels*. But choose your search terms carefully; Google looks for the search terms you chose, so *luxury hotels Maui* will probably deliver better results than *really nice places to spend the night in Maui*.

Capitalization

Google searches are **NOT** case sensitive. All letters, regardless of how you type them, will be understood as lower case. For example, searches for *george washington*, *George Washington*, and *gEoRgE wAsHiNgToN* will all return the same results.

Automatic “AND” Queries

By default, Google only returns pages that include all of your search terms. There is no need to include "and" between terms. Keep in mind that the order in which the terms are typed will affect the search results. To restrict a search further, just include more terms. For example, to plan a vacation to Hawaii, simply type *vacation hawaii*.

Phrase Searches

Sometimes you'll only want results that include an exact phrase. In this case, simply put quotation marks around your search terms.

Phrase searches are particularly effective if you're searching for proper names ("George Washington"), lyrics ("the long and winding road"), or other famous phrases ("This was their finest hour").

Negative Terms

If your search term has more than one meaning (bass, for example, could refer to fishing or music) you can focus your search by putting a minus sign ("-") in front of words related to the meaning you want to avoid. For example, here's how you'd find pages about bass-heavy lakes, but not bass-heavy music: *bass -music*
Note: when you include a negative term in your search, be sure to include a space before the minus sign.

Optional and automatically excluded words

Google usually returns pages that use all of the words you search for. However, if some of the words in your search don't appear on the best pages we find, we'll also consider pages that don't include them. For example, when you search for recipe for **a cheese souffle**, we might return recipes that don't happen to include the words "for" or "a."

Very common words (often called "stopwords"), such as "the," "and," or "of," are usually dropped from searches because they typically don't convey much information compared to the other words in a search.

We might also treat words as optional if they're redundant given the other words in your search. For example, in **UV sun protective swimwear**, requiring "UV" to appear might exclude high quality pages, so we may exclude "UV" in compiling your results.

Even when words are treated as optional, they're still taken into account in assessing how relevant a page is to your query. For example, Google shows different results for **University of Pennsylvania** than we do for **University in Pennsylvania**.

Generally, excluding common words allows us to return better search results. If one of these words is important to your search, you can precede it with a plus sign "+" to ensure that Google requires it to appear in every search result. So, for example, a search for **+The Red Violin** will return only results that include the word "the."

Alternate Words

Google usually returns pages that use all of the words you included in your search. Sometimes, however, we'll consider other words as substitutes if we think that doing so will improve the results we show you. For example, if you search for **dance marathons**, Google's results might include pages that talk about a **dance marathon**. On the result pages, we'll highlight occurrences of both the original and alternate search terms that appear in titles and snippets.

There are several ways Google identifies alternate words:

- **Stemming** finds alternate forms of a word, such as singular or plural variations.
- **Synonyms** can help someone searching for **UC Berkeley law school** find pages that mention **Boalt law school**.
- **Abbreviations** expand search terms so that **rc model airplanes** might also find pages about **radio control model airplanes**.
- Words might be **combined or split** so that we return pages about **organic dog food** when you enter **organic dogfood**.
- Because it's often easier to type words without accents, a search for a **coup d'etat** might return pages that talk about a **coup d'état**.

Usually, the alternate words we add to your results will help your search, but we understand that in some cases you want to restrict your search to precisely the terms you enter. In that case, you can precede a word with a plus sign "+" to tell Google you're looking for that exact term. So, for example, if you search for **dance +marathons**, we'll only return pages that are talking about more than one.

Synonym Search

If you want to search not only for your search term but also for its synonyms, place the tilde sign ("~") immediately in front of your search term.

For example, here's how to search for food facts and nutrition and cooking information:

~food ~facts

OR Search

To find pages that include either of two search terms, add an uppercase OR between the terms.

For example, here's how to search for a vacation in either London or Paris:

Vacation London OR Paris

Domain Search

You can use Google to search only within one specific website by entering the search terms you're looking for, followed by the word "site" and a colon followed by the domain name. For example, here's how you'd find admission information on the Stanford University site: admission site:www.stanford.edu

I'm Feeling Lucky

After you've entered your search terms, you might want to try the "I'm Feeling Lucky" button, which takes you straight to the most relevant website that Google found for your query. You won't see the search results page at all, but if you did, the "I'm Feeling Lucky" site would be listed on top.

For example, if you're looking for the Stanford University homepage, just enter Stanford and click "I'm Feeling Lucky" instead of the Google Search button. Google will take you directly to "www.stanford.edu."

Advanced Searches

Once you know the basics of Google search, you might want to try Advanced Search, which offers numerous options for making your searches more precise and getting more useful results.

You can do a lot more with Google search than just typing in search terms. With Advanced Search, you can search only for pages:

- that contain ALL the search terms you type in
- that contain the exact phrase you type in
- that contain at least one of the words you type in
- that do NOT contain any of the words you type in
- written in a certain language
- created in a certain file format
- that have been updated within a certain period of time
- that contain numbers within a certain range
- within a certain domain, or website
- that don't contain "adult" material

“+” Search

Google may return some search results that include variations of your search words, such as synonyms and plurals. We may also omit common words and characters such as a, the, how, and other digits and letters which may slow down your search without improving the results. We'll indicate if a word has been excluded or modified by displaying details on the results page below the search box.

If a word is essential to getting the results you want, or if you want to ensure a word is included exactly as you enter it, add a "+" sign immediately in front of it in the search box. (Be sure to also include a space between the "+" sign and any other words in your search.)

For example, here's how to ensure that Google includes the "I" in a search for Star Wars, Episode I: Star Wars Episode +I

Numrange Search

Feel like a number? Numrange searches for results containing numbers in a given range. Just add two numbers, separated by two periods, with no spaces, into the search box along with your search terms. You can use Numrange to set ranges for everything from dates (Willie Mays 1950..1960) to weights (5000..10000 kg truck). But be sure to specify a unit of measurement or some other indicator of what the number range represents. For example, here's how you'd search for a DVD player that costs between \$50 and \$100: DVD player \$50..\$100

Other Advanced Search Features

- **Google Local:** Find products and services in a specific U.S. town or zip code.
- **Language:** specify in which language you'd like your results.
- **Technology Search:** find information related to Apple Macintosh, BSD Unix, Linux or Microsoft.
- **Date:** restrict your results to the past three, six, or twelve month periods.
- **Occurrences:** specify where your search terms occur on the page - anywhere on the page, in the title, or in the url.
- **Domains:** search only a specific website, or exclude that site from your search.
- **SafeSearch:** Eliminates adult sites from search results.

Other Interesting Utilizations of Google

- **Define:** Define Words
- **Conversion:** Converts most units (dollars to euros, liters to gallons)
- **Basic Mathematics** – Follows Order of Operations
- **Google Blog Search** – Blogsearch.google.com
- **Google Finance** – finance.google.com
- **Google Mobile**
- **Google News**
- **Google Patent Search**
- **Google Scholar**