



Smarter Online Searching

Search Terms

Never go online without first thinking about the best search terms to use. Think also about synonyms (words that mean the same thing) and related terms, because you may need to switch gears if your first search doesn't get you the results you need.

For example, if you want to know what people eat in Afghanistan, you could use the search terms *Afghanistan, food, diet*. Related terms would include *agriculture, crops, recipes*.

Search Tips

Most search engines have both simple and advanced search screens. Follow these five basic tips for smarter searching:

1. Put quotation marks around multiple word phrases or people's names ("*ice cream*" "*Alexander the Great*"). If you forget the quotation marks around "*ice cream*" you'll get sites that use both words but not necessarily together as a phrase.
2. Always use at least two search terms (example: "*ancient Greece*" *clothing*) to get more precise results.
3. Exclude search terms using the advanced search screen. For example if you want information on the planet Saturn and want to eliminate sites about Saturn the car manufacturer, search *Saturn planet -car -automobile*.
4. Find different forms of your search term by shortening, or truncating, the word using the asterisk symbol (*). For example, typing in *jewel** tells the search engine to find *jewel, jewels, jewelry, jeweler, and jewelers*.
5. Limit your search to one site or one type of site by using *url:* as a search term. For example, if you want to search the NASA web site for information on Saturn, type in *Saturn site:nasa.gov*. Or if you want to search only educational sites for ancient Greek clothing, type in "*ancient Greek*" *clothing site:.edu*.

Search Engines

Many search engines have special features:

1. Google lets you search specifically for images and news stories.
2. AltaVista lets you search for images, sound files, video files, and news stories.
3. Teoma suggests ways to refine and narrow your search.
4. Vivisimo organizes your search results into folders by category.
5. Directories like Yahoo let you click categories and keep narrowing your search until you find what you want. This is helpful if you're not sure which search terms to use.
6. Metasearch engines like MetaCrawler and Dogpile lets you search several search engines at the once.