

Using the Web for Research: Basic Search Features of Many Search Engines

I. Three Main Ways to Find Information on the Web

1. You know a specific site, have a specific URL => type in the Location box of your browser.
2. You want to find reliable web sites about a broad topic => browse a Web subject directory like [Librarians' Index to the Internet](#) or [Infomine](#).
3. You have keywords describing your topic => type the keywords into a search engine like [Google](#) or a metasearch engine like [Metacrawler](#).

For a list of recommended search engines, go to [Internet Search](#) on the DVC homepage.

II. Common Search Features for Many Search Engines

Ways to Focus or Obtain Fewer Results:

1. exact phrase searching, use quotation marks
2. combine keywords to require both terms or phrases be found, use **AND** or +
3. eliminating keywords or phrases, use **NOT** or **AND NOT** or - "
4. limit keyword or phrase to a specific part of the Web page

Examples:

"health care reform"
"hepatitis B"
"I have a dream"

terrorism AND "food supply"
+"Martin Luther King Jr."
+"March on Washington"

+"Star Wars" -movies
"Bill Clinton" AND scandals -
Lewinsky

Choose *advance search* option.

Ways to Broaden or Obtain More Results:

1. use synonyms for keywords, connecting with OR adolescent OR youth OR teenager
2. use asterisk (*) to truncate a keyword so that variations of the keyword are found child* AND "body image"

III. Tips

- Some search engines make a difference between capital and lower case letters. So, don't use all capital letters unless necessary (e.g. AIDS).
- Try different ways to do your search (vary keywords, use operators like AND, OR, NOT)
- Limit search to a particular domain (edu, gov, org) by using the Advanced Search option of Google.
- Try different search engines. They refer you to different web sites.
- Ask a Reference Librarian for help.

Adapted from a CCSF Library web page (<http://www.ccsf.org/Library/instruct/websearch.pdf>)
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