Using the Internet for Research: Advanced Google Searching

Before you begin…

- Identify the main concepts of your topic.
- What are your key search terms?
- Look for other key words and synonyms.
- Be specific.
- Put the most important terms first.

The results screen

■ Cached

Search the cached copy that Google stored when it retrieved the page if the current page won't connect.
Also very useful when you want to see where your search terms are on a page - the cache copy **highlights your search terms**.
An HTML option, when offered, also highlights your terms.

Electronic **Iraq**: What's New?
Electronic **Iraq** is a news portal on the US-**Iraq**
conflict with a humanitarian basis. ...
electronic**iraq**.net/news/ - 31k - 8 Aug 2004 - Cached - Similar pages
:: The Independent Voice of **Iraq** :: **IRAQ** TODAY ::

■ Indented results are a second result from the site immediately above.

Find more relevant results...focus your search

■ Intitle

Use **intitle:**_and your keyword_ (no space after 'intitle:') to return pages with that word in the title and the other terms on the page somewhere. (Remember to put your most important term first.)
eg 'allintitle:otago museum virtually'
returns pages with 'otago' in the title and 'museum' and 'virtually' in the page somewhere.
.

■ All intitle

allintitle:_and your keywords_ produces a very specific and limited search –
all of your keywords will be in the title of the web page.

Find more relevant results…focus your search.

■ Domain searching

Use a site or **domain search** to limit your search to a particular type of site such as New Zealand educational or academic sites.
eg *sports otago* **site:***ac.nz*
only returns results from sites with 'ac.nz' in their URL (web address).
NB You must use the last part of the 'top level' domain in a URL - ie the last part before the first single forward slash(/).

Common domains**:**
.com	commercial company USA
.co.nz	commercial NZ
.co.uk	commercial site UK
.org	non-profit making organisation
.org.nz	non-profit organisation NZ
.org.uk	non-profit UK
.edu	academic / educational site USA
.edu.au	academic site in Australia
.ac.nz	academic / educational site NZ
.ac.uk	academic site UK
.gov	government site
.gov.uk	government site UK
.govt.nz	government site NZ

■ Domain searching within a particular site

Useful when you want to find information within a particular web site
eg *classes* **site:**www.library.otago.ac.nz
returns webpages about classes held in the University of Otago Library

■ Search for a specific file type

Retrieve results with a link to specific file type (eg PDF).
eg ipod OR mp3 **filetype:pdf**
returns PDF documents about either Mp3's or Ipods.

Available formats include:
Adobe Portable Document Format (pdf)
Microsoft PowerPoint (ppt)
Microsoft Word (doc)
Microsoft Excel (xls)

■ Exclude terms

Narrow your search by adding a minus sign immediately in front of the word you want to exclude eg *iraq –war* will return pages on Iraq but which do not mention War.

■ Search within results (at the bottom of your result screen) allows you to continue
searching within the current result list.

Expand your search

■ Synonym function ~

Google's synonym function uses the tilde symbol (the curly horizontal line ~).
Added directly before a word eg ~beginner, Google will find results that may not
necessarily include that word, but which will include results with similar meanings
and concepts such as 'beginner's', 'learn', 'tutorial' etc.

■ Definitions

1. All words for which Google can provide a **dictionary definition** (via Answers.com)
are underlined in the blue bar above your search results. The definition may help you
to determine other possible synonyms, key words and search terms.

2. Or use the Google 'define' option to see a definition for a word or phrase as used in
web sites and in online glossaries.
'**define**: *and the word you want a definition for'* returns definitions gathered from online
sources.

■ Similar pages

Use the **Similar pages link** to locate pages which Google feels have similar content.

■ Page links

Type "link:*and the site URL*" (no space after 'link:') in Google's search box to see a
list of all web pages which provide a link to that page
eg **link:***www.library.otago.ac.nz* returns all pages which provide a link to the library on
their own pages. This can be useful for finding similar pages, and also for evaluation -
are they quality sites?

Other features…

■ Google alerts   http://www.google.com/alerts
Automatic email updates of the latest relevant Google results based on your query or
topic.

Quick Google Checklist…

"phrase searching"	use quotation marks around exact phrases eg "the grass is greener"
OR	returns results that include either of your search terms eg 'ipod OR mp3' (NB: 'OR' must be UPPERCASE)
synonyms ~	find alternative keywords eg '~deaf' returns deaf, deafness, blindness, impairment etc.
define:	find definitions from web pages and online glossaries etc eg 'define:mp3'
exclude	use '-' immediately before a word you wish to exclude from your search eg Iraq –war
intitle:	returns pages with that keyword in the title and the other terms on the page somewhere eg intitle:Otago museum virtually
allintitle:	only returns results that include all of your terms in the title eg allintitle:otago museum virtually
domain search	allows you to limit to particular sites (eg academic only) eg deaf site:ac.nz
search one site	search within one site only eg classes site:www.library.otago.ac.nz
filetype	search for a particular filetype eg ipod OR mp3 filetype:pdf

Checklist of criteria for evaluating web sites…

Library resources and databases have already been pre-screened and evaluated by professionals.
Information on the Web is entirely unscreened - *you* must critically evaluate the content yourself.
As with print information, Web based information should be appraised for *credibility, authority, currency, accuracy* and *bias.*

■ Author information (who wrote the page?)

- Author's name?
- Title / position? Credentials?
- Does it provide contact information?
- Is the author quoted by other sources?

■ Site information (who owns/publishes the site?)

- Does the site have authority for its claims?
- Does it link to an organisational affiliation?
- Does it provide contact information?
- Look for a header or footer identifying the sponsor or affiliation of the site.
- The URL can provide source information. Check the domain - .edu .com .ac .gov .org .net
- Do other reputable sites link to this site?

■ Currency (when was the page written?)

- Is the information up-to-date enough for your purpose?
- Is the page dated? When was it last updated?
- Are the links within it current or expired?

■ Accuracy (is the information reliable?)

- Is the information factual, detailed, exact and comprehensive?
- Is it credible, probable or possible?
- Can the information be verified in other sources?
- Are links provided to supporting evidence?
- Is it well designed and without spelling or grammatical errors?

■ Bias / Purpose (why was this page written?)

- Is the information balanced and objective?
- Who is the intended audience? (academics, potential customers?)
- Is there advertising on the page?
- Is the language used designed to sway opinion?
- Does the author have any connection to an organisation or institution that may influence their treatment of the topic?
- If there is an overriding opinion it should be stated and not disguised.

Think critically! Evaluate!