

# Searching with Google

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*Trilogy Computer Club – December 18, 2014 – Bob Alford – rsalford@gmail.com*

## 1. Synopsis

This handout is a guideline to improving your Google searches. It covers basic tips, basic operators, targeted searches and the advanced search tool. For more on Google see support.google.com.

## 2. Introduction

Google is arguably the world's most powerful search engine. It is far more sophisticated than most people realize. A key to its success is the very simple interface. However, it will often return millions of entries, most of them irrelevant. The trick is in knowing how to use Google to get what you want.

## 3. Basic Tips

1. Start simple and refine the search as you go
2. Take advantage of the hints
3. Add relevant words
4. Use only important words
5. Add operators and keywords to refine the search

### Starting Simple

Google is very fast. Let Google do the work for you. Start very simple and then refine the search as you go. If you construct a complex query initially, you may miss important data.

### Add Relevant Words

Now start refining your search by adding words, but keep it simple.

### Use only Important Words

Google searches on all of the words in a query. Including too many words will lead to poor results.

### Add operators and keywords to refine the search

That is what the next section of this handout is about.

## 4. Search Operators

Search operators are keywords and punctuation that can be included in a query to refine the search. Double quotes are an example of a search operator. Putting a phrase in double quotes means "Match Exactly." There are many search operators. This handout covers only a few of the most useful ones. For a complete list, go to: <https://sites.google.com/site/gwebsearcheducation/advanced-operators>.

## Search for an exact phrase (“...”)

Use quotes to search for an exact phrase. A word of caution: Google has an important feature that finds similar words or spellings. This feature is disabled for any phrase within the quotation marks, so you must have the correct spelling.

## Range of Numbers (..)

Suppose you want to qualify a search by a date, but you don't know the exact year. If you tried to guess, you might be wrong and not find what you are looking for. Instead, use a range. For example 1600..1650 will qualify the search for things that happened between those dates. This can be used for any range of numbers, such as, price, temperature, etc.

## Search for either word (OR)

The OR operator will search for either word or phrase. For example England OR Scotland. This can also be used for alternate spellings. For example “Benedict Alford” OR “Benedict Alvord”

## Exclude a Word (-)

You can eliminate records that contain a certain word or phrase by including a minus sign followed by that word.

## Include Similar Words (~)

Putting a tilde (~) in front of a word will cause Google to return records that contain synonyms for that word.

## Wildcard or “fill in a blank” (\*)

The \* character is a wildcard that means “match anything.” This wildcard is less useful than it might seem because it matches too much, but it can be useful if you are unsure of a spelling, or when used in conjunction with other operators.

## Caution

Be sure you know the correct use of operators. Some people try to use + or &, which mean AND in some search engines. They do not work in Google.

## 5. Keywords

### Define – Show the definition of a word

For a quick dictionary, try Google using the Define keyword. For example:

Define: succinct

### Translate – Translate to or from a foreign language

To translate a word, phrase from a foreign language try using the Translate keyword. For example:

Translate: Agua Fria

To translate larger amounts of text, or to translate to a foreign language, go to <http://translate.google.com>

## Site - Targeted Search

Google is a much more powerful searching engine than the one found on most websites. A special Keyword, (site) allows you to use the Google engine against any website. For example, the search string:

“John Hathaway” 1705 site:archive.org

Will search the Internet Archive site (not to be confused with the commercial site Archives.com) for any records they have about my immigrant ancestor. You can use the same search operators you use in any Google search.

There are some limitations to this method. Google cannot search behind login walls or pay walls, nor can it do database queries. However, this method is well worth trying. If you are using a site that has a search engine that does not work very well, try using Google with the site keyword.

## 6. Google Advanced Search

Google has an advanced search that allows you to enter the parameters of your search into a form. It is located at:

[http://www.google.com/advanced\\_search](http://www.google.com/advanced_search)

An image of the form is shown on the next page.

When you fill out the form the Google query will be created for you and a normal response will appear. You can edit the query to make changes or go back to the Advanced Search page.

Find pages with...

all these words:

this exact word or phrase:

any of these words:

none of these words:

numbers ranging from:

to

Then narrow your results  
by...

language:

any language



region:

any region



last update:

anytime



site or domain:

terms appearing:

anywhere in the page



SafeSearch:

Show most relevant results



reading level:

no reading level displayed



file type:

any format



usage rights:

not filtered by license



Advanced Search

## 7. More Info

- List of operators:
  - <https://sites.google.com/site/gwebsearcheducation/advanced-operators>
- Self Paced on-line courses
  - <http://www.powersearchingwithgoogle.com/course/ps/course.html>
  - <http://www.powersearchingwithgoogle.com/course/aps>