



Web Search Engines

What Are Web Search Engines?

Search engines are computer programs that travel the Web, gather the text of Web pages and make it possible to search for them. Please keep in mind that **no search engine covers the entire Web**. In fact, experts estimate that the largest search engines cover only 15% of the World Wide Web. **No search engine is completely up to date**. Search engines are rugged individualists—none of them index the same Web information, and none of them are searched the same way. It is imperative that you take the time **to read the help screens** before using any search engine.

How Can I Learn to Use Search Engines?

Excellent tutorials can be found at:

1. www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/
2. <http://library.albany.edu/internet>

Are There Rules of Thumb for Learning to Use Search Engines?

1. Thoroughly learn to use one or two of the simple search engines such as **Google**.
2. Learn one meta-search engine such as **Vivisimo** www.vivisimo.com
3. Learn one complex search engine such as **All the Web Advanced Search**.

What Are Some Good Search Engines?

All the Web

www.alltheweb.com

An excellent simple search engine that is very similar to Google in that it ranks results according to the number of pages linked to them. Its Advanced Search option permits full Boolean searching.

The Rules

1. All the Web reads spaces between words as the Boolean “and”.
2. Put multi-word phrases in quotation marks “**united states**”.
3. All the Web is case insensitive. “**United States**” is identical to “**united states**”.
4. All the Web does not permit wildcards.
5. All the Web simple search allows for Boolean “and” with a + sign, and Boolean not with a –
6. All the Web simple search enables searching for News, Pictures, Video, Audio and FTP files.

7. All the Web permits field limiters. A field limiter requires that a key word or phrase appear in a specific section of a Web page. The title limiter is perhaps the most useful in that if a search is confined to only the title of a Web page, it is likely that the results will be on topic.

url:football
link:www.mongtgomerycollege.edu
title:"Libraries' Home Page"
seize language:fr (seize means 16 in French)

7. All the Web advanced search permits the use of Boolean operators, "and" "or". Not is written "andnot."
8. All the Web's advanced search includes several other filters.

Google

www.google.com

One of the largest, fastest and easiest to use simple search engines. Google puts pages that have the most pages linked to them at the top of the search results list. This simple strategy is a surprisingly effective method of finding good sites quickly.

The Rules

1. Google reads spaces between words as the Boolean "and" .
2. Google simple search permits or when input in ALL CAPS (**horses OR riding**).
3. Be sure to put any multi-word phrase in quotation marks: "**united states**".
4. Google is case insensitive: Google reads "United States" and "united states" identically.
5. Use + signs to include stop words in your search **+in +the gloaming** .
6. Use - signs to exclude words **saturn -car -automobile** .
7. Google does not permit Wildcards.
8. You may field limit on the Google main search page by typing the kind of limit you wish, a colon, and then the keywords. **title:hmo lawsuits** . Google allows for field limits similar to those outlined for All the Web, above.
9. Google permits searching for pictures Usenet Newsgroups and an excellent Subject Directory. It does not have an easy method of searching for audio, video or FTP files.
10. **Google Advanced Search** is excellent and can be reached by clicking on **Advanced Search**
On the Google Advanced Search :
"with all of the words" is equivalent to the Boolean "AND."
"with any of the words" is equivalent to the Boolean "OR."
"without the words" is equivalent to the Boolean "NOT."
"with the exact phrase" is equivalent to putting a phrase.
You may limit by language, date, format etc.
Use "Occurrences" to limit by field.

Google Uncle Sam

www.google.com/unclesam

Searches government documents, some of the most useful information on the Web. The same rules apply.

Vivisimo

<http://vivisimo.com>

Vivisimo is a very sophisticated, very fast meta-search engine, with many useful features.

The Rules

1. Both the simple and advanced search use the same syntax..
2. Vivisimo has excellent help screens. Click on Help on the simple search screen, and Syntax on the advanced search screen.
3. Vivisimo will sort results into categories. This can be helpful.
4. You may select which search engines you wish to search in the advanced search window.
5. You may use either and, or , not, and not, as well as + -. A blank space is equivalent to "AND."
6. It permits field limiting
title:"health maintenance organizations" will find titles of web pages.
url: www.montgomerycollege.edu will find text in the url
text:hmo and lawsuits will find phrase in the body of the paper.
domain:edu will permit you to limit to a certain domain, e.g. .edu or .com etc.

There are several excellent Web pages that compare search engines. The most thorough and objective is Search Engine Showdown. Its URL is www.searchengineshowdown.com Search Engine Showdown also lists and describes dozens of smaller, specialized search engines. These include: phone number databases, sites where experts will answer questions for a fee, news search engines, statistics, job postings, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, women's topics etc.

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Need more help? Call or ask at the Reference Desk!

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