Google Search Strategies

Google is a great place to begin searching the web, but the constantly growing number of results can be intimidating to navigate. The search engine crawls and indexes the web all the time, so the amount of information available is vast. This guide will help make your searches more exact with tools, operators, and filters. Get the best results by constructing the best search.

Find pages with...

all these words:

this exact word or phrase:

any of these words:

none of these words:

numbers ranging from:

Begin at Google's advanced search page: http://www.google.com/advanced_search.

Searching in the **all these words** field (without setting any other filters or using any other search fields) is identical to searching from the basic search screen at google.com. Google will search for all the keywords anywhere on a page. Searching in the **this exact word or phrase** field returns results in which your keywords appear together, in order. Enclose a phrase in quotation marks to search this way from the basic search screen (example: "licorice pizza"). The **any of these words** field retrieves results for one or more of your search terms, but not necessarily all of them. Separate terms using the OR operator to search this way from the basic search screen (example: Illinois OR il). The **none of these words** field excludes terms from a search. Put a minus sign before a term to search this way from the basic search page (example: "Elmwood Park" –"New Jersey"). Enter two years, dollar amounts or other units of measurement in the **numbers ranging from** field to only search for results within the specified range. Put two periods between the figures to search this way from the basic search page (example: 1980..1989).

There are a number of helpful options to narrow your results on the advanced search page. Many of these can be applied after performing the search as well. **Last update** is helpful when you only want recent results. **Site or domain** allows you to search a specific site, or all sites with a particular domain (.gov, .edu, .org, etc.). Include site: or –site: (to exclude a site from results) immediately before your search term to use this operator from the basic search page. The **file type** dropdown is useful if you are searching for a document you are sure would be posted as a PDF or an Excel file, for example. Include filetype:pdf in your search to do this from the basic search screen.

More search operators and tools

Tool	Example
* (truncation)	read* (read, reads, reading, reader, readers)
# (social searching)	#throwbackthursday
info: (find similar pages, pages that link to a page, a cached version of a page, and more)	info:chicagotribune.com
$ (search prices)	tablet $400
define: (get the definition of a word, phrase or acronym)	define:AASL define:"hostile takeover" define:verisimilitude
intext: (returns pages containing the following term in the text of the page)	"Star Wars" news intext:C-3PO

Combine search operators in a single string for a more exact search. Remember to use the parentheses to keep distinct elements of your search separate. Try these examples. Note that there are no spaces between the filetype: and site: operators and their search terms. These operators will not function if a space is included. The same is true for the minus symbol and the two dots in the date range.

"elmwood park" site:bandcamp.com (illinois OR il) -"new jersey" -nj

illinois budget 2013..2016 filetype:pdf

site:twitter.com #YAlit dystopia

"artificial intelligence" site:.edu intext:personal

For better results, use the date range search tool instead of the two dots (2013..2016). For social searching, include site:twitter.com or site:facebook.com along with the # for the best results. For Twitter, look for the results that have /status/ in the URL. You can actually click through these to see the specific tweet. Do you see the difference in the search results?

Now try performing the same searches using the advanced search page.

Google advanced search for images

If you are looking for images, start at the advanced image search page: http://www.google.com/advanced_image_search. This looks similar to the advanced search page, but offers a variety of tools to help you find the best images to match your search. The **image size** and **aspect ratio** dropdowns help tailor your search to results in dimensions that will work for you. The **colors in image** options ensure your results have the right feel. Filter by **usage rights** if you are looking for images that you can reuse without permission and outside the parameters of fair use. You can filter by the type of use that is authorized (commercial or non-commercial, modifications allowed or not allowed). It is still a good idea to click through to the page to confirm the licensing status of an image before making use of it. Google does not guarantee that the **usage rights** filter is 100% accurate.

Click on the camera icon on the basic image search page (https://www.google.com/imghp) to search by image. You may upload an image from your computer or paste the address of an image on the web to search this way. Scroll down to the "pages that include matching images" section of the search results to learn more about the image.

Questions? Contact Adult Services at askref@elmwoodparklibrary.org or 708-395-1217.