

Google Advance Search

1. **Advanced Features:** This document highlights the more advanced features of Google Web Search. Keep in mind though that even very advanced searchers, such as the members of the search group at Google, use these features less than 5% of the time. Basic simple search is often enough.
2. **Phrase Search (""):** By putting double quotes around a set of words, you are telling Google to consider the exact words in that exact order without any change. Google already uses the order and the fact that the words are together as a very strong signal and will stray from it only for a good reason, so quotes are usually unnecessary. By insisting on phrase search you might be missing good results accidentally. For example, a search for ["Alexander Bell"] (with quotes) will miss the pages that refer to Alexander G. Bell.
3. **Search Within a Specific Website (Site):** Google allows you to specify that your search results must come from a given website. For example, the query [iraq site:nytimes.com] will return pages about Iraq but only from nytimes.com. The simpler queries [iraq nytimes.com] or [iraq New York Times] will usually be just as good, though they might return results from other sites that mention the New York Times. You can also specify a whole class of sites, for example [iraq site:.gov] will return results only from a .gov domain and [iraq site:.iq] will return results only from Iraqi sites.
4. **Terms You Want to Exclude (-):** Attaching a minus sign immediately before a word indicates that you do not want pages that contain this word to appear in your results. The minus sign should appear immediately before the word and should be preceded with a space. For example, in the query [anti-virus software], the minus sign is used as a hyphen and will not be interpreted as an exclusion symbol; whereas the query [anti-virus -software] will search for the words 'anti-virus' but exclude references to software. You can exclude as many words as you want by using the - sign in front of all of them, for example [jaguar -cars -football -os]. The - sign can be used to exclude more than just words. For example, place a hyphen before the 'site:' operator (without a space) to exclude a specific site from your search results.
5. **Fill in the Blanks (*):** The *, or wildcard, is a little-known feature that can be very powerful. If you include * within a query, it tells Google to try to treat the star as a placeholder for any unknown term(s) and then find the best matches. For example, the search [Google *] will give you results about many of Google's products (go to next page and next page -- we have many products). The query [Obama voted * on the * bill] will give you stories about different votes on different bills. Note that the * operator works only on whole words, not parts of words.
6. **Search Exactly as is (""):** Google employs synonyms automatically, so that it finds pages that mention, for example, childcare for the query [child care] (with a space), or California history for the query [ca history]. But sometimes Google helps out a little too much and gives you a synonym when you don't really want it. By putting double quotes around a *single* word, you are telling Google to match that word precisely as you typed it.

7. **The OR Operator:** Google's default behavior is to consider all the words in a search. If you want to specifically allow *either* one of several words, you can use the OR operator (note that you have to type 'OR' in ALL CAPS). For example, [San Francisco Giants 2004 OR 2005] will give you results about either one of these years, whereas [San Francisco Giants 2004 2005] (without the OR) will show pages that include both years on the same page. The symbol | can be substituted for OR. (The AND operator, by the way, is the default, so it is not needed.)
8. **Exceptions:** Search is rarely absolute. Search engines use a variety of techniques to imitate how people think and to approximate their behavior. As a result, most rules have exceptions. For example, the query [for better or for worse] will not be interpreted by Google as an OR query, but as a phrase that matches a (very popular) comic strip. Google will show calculator results for the query [34 * 87] rather than use the 'Fill in the blanks' operator. Both cases follow the obvious intent of the query.
9. **Exceptions to 'Every Word Matters':** Words that are commonly used, like 'the,' 'a,' and 'for,' are usually ignored (these are called stop words). But there are even exceptions to this exception. The search [the who] likely refers to the band; the query [who] probably refers to the World Health Organization -- Google will not ignore the word 'the' in the first query. Synonyms might replace some words in your original query. (Adding + before a word disables synonyms.) A particular word might not appear on a page in your results if there is sufficient other evidence that the page is relevant. The evidence might come from language analysis that Google has done or many other sources. For example, the query [overhead view of the bellagio pool] will give you nice overhead pictures from pages that do not include the word 'overhead.'
10. **Punctuation That is NOT Ignored:** Punctuation in popular terms that have particular meanings, like [C++] or [C#] (both are names of programming languages), are not ignored. The dollar sign (\$) is used to indicate prices. [nikon 400] and [nikon \$400] will give different results. The hyphen - is sometimes used as a signal that the two words around it are very strongly connected. (Unless there is no space after the - and a space before it, in which case it is a negative sign.) The underscore symbol _ is not ignored when it connects two words, e.g. [quick_sort].
11. **Guidelines For Better Search - Keep it Simple:** If you're looking for a particular company, just enter its name, or as much of its name as you can recall. If you're looking for a particular concept, place, or product, start with its name. If you're looking for a pizza restaurant, just enter pizza and the name of your town or your zip code. Most queries do not require advanced operators or unusual syntax. Simple is good.
12. **Think How the Page You are Looking For Will be Written:** A search engine is not a human; it is a program that matches the words you give to pages on the web. Use the words that are most likely to appear on the page. For example, instead of saying [my head hurts], say [headache], because that's the term a medical page will use. The query [in what country are bats considered an omen of good luck?] is very clear to a person, but the document that gives the answer may not have those words. Instead, use the query [bats are considered good luck in] or even just [bats good luck], because that is probably what the right page will say.
13. **Describe What You Need With as Few Terms as Possible:** The goal of each word in a query is to focus it further. Since all words are used, each additional word limits the results. If you limit too

much, you will miss a lot of useful information. The main advantage to starting with fewer keywords is that, if you don't get what you need, the results will likely give you a good indication of what additional words are needed to refine your results on the next search. For example, [weather cancu] is a simple way to find the weather and it is likely to give better results than the longer [weather report for cancu mexico].

14. **Choose Descriptive Words:** The more unique the word is the more likely you are to get relevant results. Words that are not very descriptive, like 'document,' 'website,' 'company,' or 'info,' are usually not needed. Keep in mind, however, that even if the word has the correct meaning but it is not the one most people use, it may not match the pages you need. For example, [celebrity ringtones] is more descriptive and specific than [celebrity sounds].
15. **How to Read Search Results:** Google's goal is to provide you with results that are clear and easy to read.



16. **Search Results:**

- (1) The title: The first line of any search result is the title of the webpage.
- (2) The snippet: A description of or an excerpt from the webpage.
- (3) The URL: The webpage's address.
- (4) Cached link: A link to an earlier version of this page. Click here if the page you wanted isn't available.

All these features are important in determining whether the page is what you need. The title is what the author of the page designated as the best short description of the page.

17. **Google Alerts:** Monitor the Web for interesting new content. Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on your choice of query or topic.

Enter the topic you wish to monitor, then click preview to see the type of results you'll receive.

Some handy uses of Google Alerts include:

- (1) monitoring a developing news story
- (2) tracking information on your surname
- (3) getting the latest on a celebrity or event
- (4) keeping tabs on your favorite sports teams
- (5) getting information on a particular city or location

18. **What's New:** The +1 button is shorthand for "this is pretty cool" or "you should check this out." Click +1 to publicly give something your stamp of approval. Your +1's can help friends, contacts, and others on the web find the best stuff when they search. Watch the Video:

<http://www.google.com/+1/button/>

19. **Google Offers Much More:** Now available from the google.com main page

- (1) Images: Search for images on the web
- (2) Maps: View maps and directions
- (3) Blogger: Create your own blog
- (4) Reader: RSS feeds
- (5) Gmail: Google's email
- (6) iGoogle: Personalized Google Page
- (7) Books: millions of books from libraries and publishers
- (8) Translate: language translation service
- (9) Docs: Create and Share online documents
- (10) And Much More

20. **Beyond Google:** Google wasn't the first search engine and isn't the only one available, even if it is the world's most popular.

- (1) Can't find what you want – try others
- (2) Yahoo! Search – yahoo.com – 2nd largest
- (3) Bing – bing.com – Microsoft's entry
- (4) Alta Vista – altavista.com – powered by Yahoo!
- (5) Excite – excite.com – a famous 90's dotcom.
- (6) Go – go.com – from Disney
- (7) Ask – ask.com – ask your question here
- (8) Lycos – lycos.com – top 5 internet portal

21. **Information Source:**

- (1) <http://www.google.com/intl/en/help/features.html>
- (2) Click on links under "Web Search Help Center" in left margin
- (3) Click on links under "Improve Your Search Experience" under Search Features
- (4) <http://www.missionoakscomputerclub.org/helpfulinternetlinks.html> - "Education"