Search Engines Tutorial

Featuring Google, Yahoo Search & Exalead

A 2011 Compilation by Kigo wa Kariuki
Though it doesn't disclose its exact size, Google is currently thought to be the largest search engine. Other lead Search Engines include Yahoo Search which claims to have over 20 billion total ‘web objects’ and Exalead which has over 8 billion searchable pages.

To access Google search, simply type [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)
Some basic facts about Google search:

**Search is always case insensitive.** A search for [ new york times ] is the same as a search for [ New York Times ].

**Every word matters.** Generally, all the words you put in the query will be used. Eg Nursing research results

Exceptions to ‘Every word matters’- Words that are commonly used, like 'the,' 'a,' and 'for,' are usually ignored (these are called stop words). Omit them especially when at the beginning of your search query.
• **Generally, punctuation is ignored**, including @#$%^&*()=+[\] and other special characters.

• **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 underscore symbol _ is not ignored when it connects two words, e.g. [ quick_sort ].
Tips for better searches

- **Keep it simple.** With Google, Simple is good. If you are looking for a school, simply type its name or as much of the name as you can. Use as few terms as possible in your search.

- **Mind the words you employ.** Use the words that are most likely to appear on the page you are searching. For example, instead of saying [ my head hurts ], say [ headache ], because that's the term a medical page will use.
• **Choose descriptive words.** The more unique the word is the more likely you are to get relevant results. 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 ].

• Google uses square brackets [ ] to denote queries, so [ to eat not to drink] is an example of a query; [ to eat ] NOT [ to drink ] are two examples of queries.
• **Phrase search (""')** Quotes instructs a Search Engine to consider the exact words in that exact order without any change. Since Google recognizes the exact order of words as a strong signal, and will only stray from the typed order for a good reason, 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.

• **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. You can also specify a whole class of sites, for example [ iraq site:.gov ] will return results only from a .gov domain.
• **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.

• **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 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.
• **Search exactly as is (+)** By attaching a + immediately before a word (remember, don't add a space after the +), you are telling Google to match that word precisely as you typed it. Putting double quotes around a single word will do the same thing.

• **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 is the default for Google, so it is not needed.)
Valuable features of Google

Through its "Translate" link Google uses its translation software to translate words in over 60 main languages including Swahili!

Other valuable features of Google include:

- Book Search
- Google Scholar (journal articles)
- Blog Search
- Patents search,
- Images search
- Maps search, etc.
NB: Each blue underlined line is a search result that the Google search engine found for your search terms.

The first item is the most relevant match found, the second is the next most relevant, and so on down the list. If you click the title of any result, you'll be taken to that webpage.

For more help, visit:
http://www.google.com/support/websearch/bin/static.py?hl=en&page=guide.cs&guide=1221265&rd=1
Yahoo! Search Tips

• To use the search engine type search.yahoo.com in the url bar.

• Choose specific words. Use specific words to describe exactly what you're looking for. More general words give a larger number of results.

  For example:
  ✓ Try *19th century chairs* instead of *old furniture*.
  ✓ Use *digital camera reviews* instead of *electronics*.

• Make sure to watch for words with more than one meaning. If you're looking for information on modeling, make sure you specify *fashion modeling* or *clay modeling* or *mathematical modeling*.
• **Know when to require or exclude words.** You can indicate words that must be in each search result or words that cannot be in each search result. Very common words such as *it* and *how* are an exception. These appear in so many places, they usually won't impact your search results.

• To require words, type `+` in front of each word that must be in the search results. So if you want to see pages about health issues around blackberries and you mean the BlackBerry hand-held device, search for *blackberry health* +*device*.

• To exclude words, type `-` in front of each word that cannot be in the search results. So if you want to see pages about health issues around blackberries with no mention of the hand-held device, search for *blackberries health* -*device*.
• **Know how to search for exact phrases.** To search for an exact phrase, put quotation marks around two or more words. Searching for "*to be or not to be*" returns only results containing the exact phrase inside the quotation marks.

• **Know how to perform multiple searches simultaneously.** If you're equally interested in two or more alternatives, use **OR** in capital letters. So, if you are interested in seeing results for both kayaking and biking in New Zealand, search for *new zealand kayaking OR biking*.

• **Focus the types of results to return.** Click the links over the **Search** box to limit your search specifically to images, video, news, answers, or other search type.
• **Save time with Yahoo! Shortcuts.** Yahoo! Shortcuts give quick access to dictionary, synonyms, patents, traffic, stocks, encyclopedia, and more. For detailed view of all Yahoo! Shortcuts view: [http://help.yahoo.com/l/us/yahoo/search/basics/basics-05.html](http://help.yahoo.com/l/us/yahoo/search/basics/basics-05.html)

• **Narrow your search by using Yahoo! Site Explorer.** You can use Yahoo! Site Explorer to find all the webpages that link to a specific webpage.
· **Search Meta Words** - You can enter these Meta words directly into the Yahoo! Search box.

✦ **site**: Use to find all documents within a particular domain and all its subdomains. Example: **site**:yahoo.com

✦ **url**: Use to find a specific document in our index. Example: **url**:http://edit.autos.yahoo.com/repair/tree/0.html

✦ **intitle**: Use to find a specific keyword as part of the indexed titles. Example: **intitle**:Bulgarian

✦ For detailed guide on how to use Yahoo! Search visit:

Exalead Search

To use this type www.exalead.com/search/ in the url bar

**Basic Search**

- Only documents that contain all words from your search request are shown. The more words you put in your search request, the more precise the search becomes.

- Use double quotes to search for an exact phrase. This eliminates documents where the words occur but are not next to one another or are in the wrong order.

- Use the "+" operator to search for the exact word in a document. This operator also allows you to search for link words (like "the", "a", "of", "or", "and") which are ignored by default. E.g. +the godfather
• The "OPT" operator allows you to specify a term without making its presence mandatory for a document to appear in the search results. E.g. cow OPT mad

• The "-" operator allows you to remove all documents containing a specific word or expression from the search results.

• Prefix search allows you to find documents based on the beginning of a word. E.g. Jenn

• The "NEXT" operator finds documents where the query terms are next to each other. E.g. movie NEXT star

• The "NEAR" operator finds documents where the query terms are all in a short range of words. E.g. movie NEAR star

• The "AND" and "OR" operators can be combined to match documents against advanced boolean logic. E.g. (movie AND star) OR (famous AND people)
• When you do not know how to spell a word, write it as it sounds and use a phonetic search. Results will include words that sound like what you typed. E.g. soundslike:shakespear

• When you are not sure about the spelling of a word, you can search with spelling approximation. E.g. spellslie:exlaead

• The "site:" operator restricts a search to a particular web site. E.g. movie star site:flickr.com

• The "intitle:" operator allows you to search for a word or a group of words found within the title of a document. E.g. intitle:"official website"

• The "inurl:" operator allows you to search for a word or a group of words found within the URL of a document. E.g. inurl:music
• The "link:" operator allows you to search for pages that contain a given link. E.g. link:www.exalead.com

• The "language:" operator restricts a search to documents written in the given language. E.g. movie star language:en

• The "before:" operator restricts a search to documents created or modified before the given date (in the YYYY/MM/DD format). E.g. movie star before:2004/05/21

• The "after:" operator restricts a search to documents created or modified after the given date (in the YYYY/MM/DD format). E.g. movie star after:2004/05/21
For a detailed guide on how to use Exaled visit:
http://www.exalead.com/search/web/search-syntax/