Refine web searches

You can use symbols or words in your search to make your search results more precise.
- Google Search usually ignores punctuation that isn't part of a search operator.
- Don't put spaces between the symbol or word and your search term. A search for `site:nytimes.com` will work, but `site: nytimes.com` won't.

Refine image searches
Overall Advanced Search
1. Go to Advanced Image Search. (In Settings)
2. Use filters like region or file type to narrow your results.
3. At the bottom, click Advanced Search.

Search for an exact image size
Right after the word you're looking for, add the text `imagesize:widthxheight`. Make sure to add the dimensions in pixels.
Example: `imagesize:500x400`

COMMON SEARCH TECHNIQUES

Search social media
Put `@` in front of a word to search social media. For example: `@twitter`.

Search for a price
Put `$` in front of a number. For example: `camera $400`.

Search hashtags
Put `#` in front of a word. For example: `#throwbackthursday`

Exclude words from your search
Put `-` in front of a word you want to leave out. For example, `jaguar speed -car`

Search for an exact match
Put a word or phrase inside quotes. For example, `"tallest building"`.

Search within a range of numbers
Put `..` between two numbers. For example, `camera $50..$100`.

Combine searches
Put "`OR`" between each search query. For example, `marathon OR race`.

Search for a specific site
Put "`site:`" in front of a site or domain. For example, `site:youtube.com` or `site:.gov`.

Search for related sites
Put "`related:`" in front of a web address you already know. For example, `related:time.com`.

See Google's cached version of a site
Put "`cache:`" in front of the site address.
Important: Not all search operators return exhaustive results.

EXTENSIVE SEO LIST W/ DESCRIPTION

Google Advanced Search Operators: 50+ Google Search Commands

You could use them to do your job more efficiently.

For example: When gauging the amount of content dedicated to a specific topic, you can quickly filter out 90% of simple mentions.

With just one advanced operator you go from 772 million results:

To a much more specific <u>61.5 million</u>.

And this is just scratching the surface of the power of Google's search operators.

You might also be interested in advanced keyword research. Get the same <u>hyperfocus in a keyword search</u> that you do with search operators.

How to Accomplish More with Search Operators

This full article will cover advanced tactics, why you'd use them, and how to put them into action. Look for some of those special angles listed just below the video.

You can also reference this video for more common practical uses of search operators and how you'd put them into action.

Any links mentioned during the video won't be in the description, but will instead be at the end of this article.

You can scroll through the article or use these links to jump ahead to specific things you can do with Google Search Operators:

1. <u>Find internal duplicate content and other indexation errors</u>
2. <u>Find news results from certain sources to spice up your content</u>
3. <u>Find pages that contain certain keywords</u>
4. <u>Find quotes and force accurate results for long-tail keywords</u>
5. <u>Find direct competitors</u>
6. <u>Find original research, statistics and case studies on a certain topic</u>
7. <u>Find out how Google is categorizing your site</u>
8. <u>Find backlink and content opportunities</u>
9. <u>Quickly gauge the competitiveness of long-tail keywords</u>
10. <u>Find sites that have a specific keyword in their URL</u>

Google Advanced Search Operators

In this industry, we can safely assume that you probably know your way around Google already. That's why we'll start with the advanced operators.
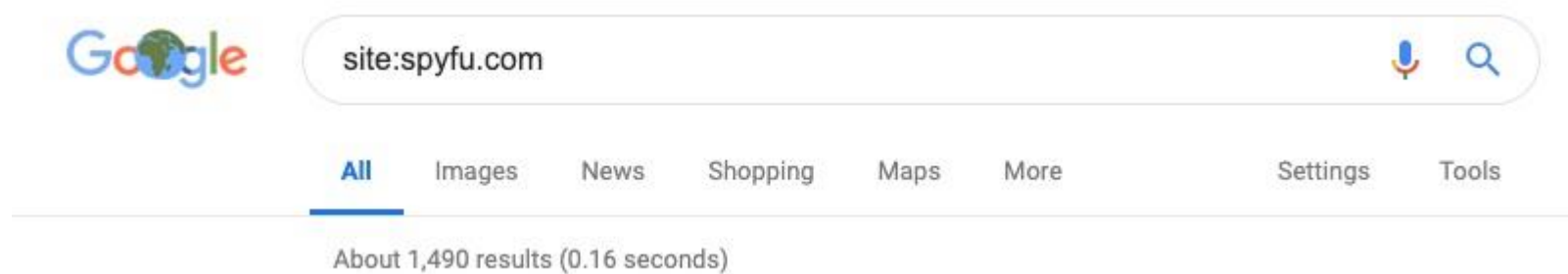
These operators help you navigate specific websites, or narrow your search in ways most laymen don't need to do.

Site:

Limit your search to a single site.

You can do a general search and quickly check if your indexed pages match up with your own database.

(If we use this for our own site, we see that roughly 1,490 results show up.)
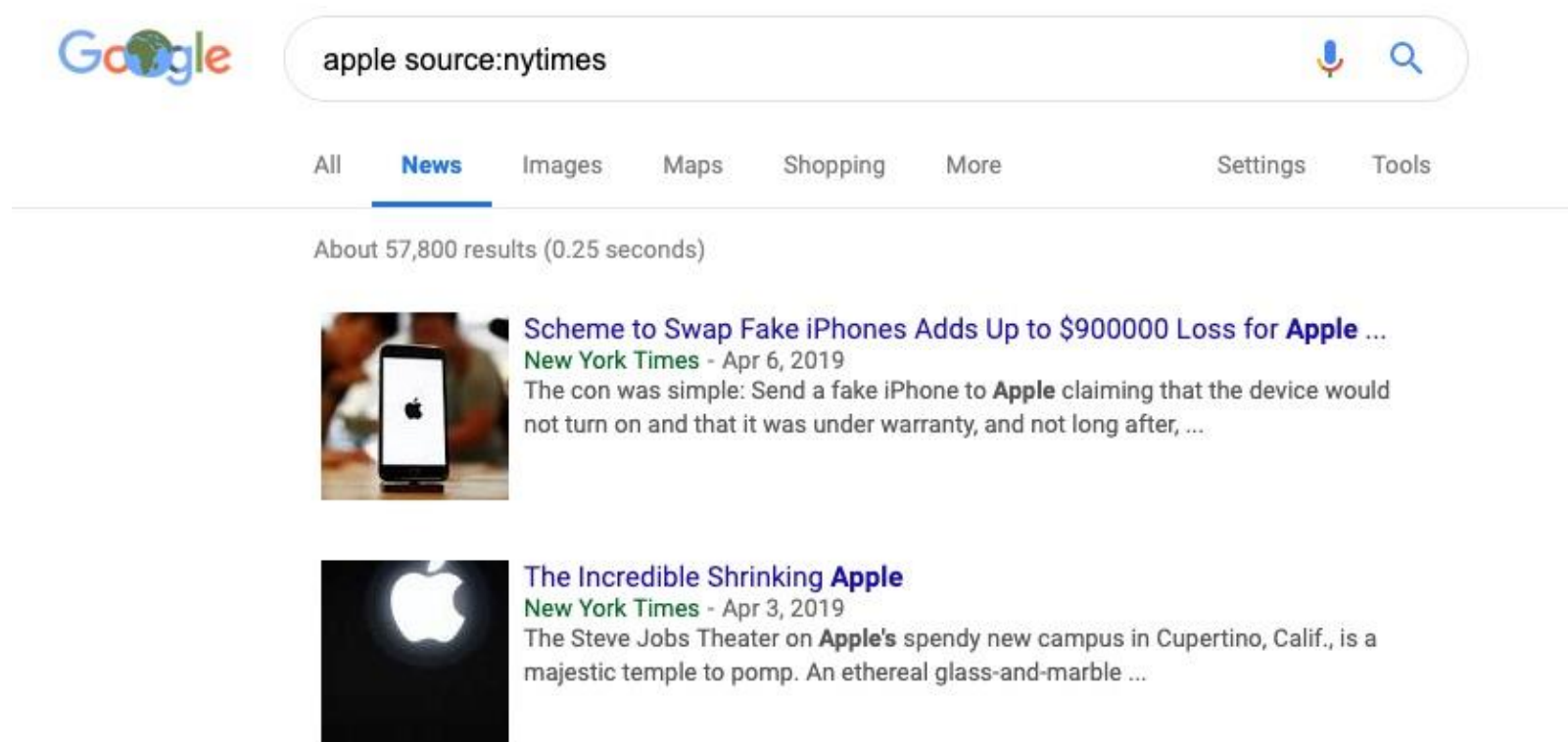

Use to:

- Find internal duplicate content and other SEO errors.
- Find link opportunities on a specific site. (Industry sites that have covered direct competitors, but not your product, in a comparison post)

Source:

The sister operator of site. Allows you to choose a specific source in Google News. (Useful if you have to cite specific news sources when you write news pieces.)

Use to:

- Source news pieces to reliable sites.
- Find quotes and tidbits to spice up your content.

Intext:

Intext tells Google that you want results where the text appears in the body of the page. (If the text appears in the title, but not the body text, it won't be returned as a result. Since it virtually functions the same as a normal Google result, there aren't many advanced uses. *We kept it in the list to contrast it against this next operator "Allintext."*

Example - <u>intext:airpods</u>

Allintext:

Basically the same as intext, but every word in the query has to be in the body text of a page. Otherwise, Google does not include it in results. Essentially functions as using " " quotes on individual words.

Use to:
- Find quotes.
- Force accurate results for long-tail keywords.

Example - <u>allintext:airpods 2</u>

Intitle:

Intitle tells Google that you only want results where pages include the search term in their meta title tag. This operator helps you understand how many pages target a particular search phrase.

Use to:
- Check levels of competitiveness of keywords.
- <u>Find backlink opportunities.</u>

Example - <u>intitle:samsung</u>

Allintitle:

Same as intitle, but ensures every word in the query is in the title meta tag of all results. If you sold airpods on your ecommerce site you could use this operator to find other websites that have 'airpods' in their titles. This is a quick and easy way to spot your direct competition.

Use to:

- Find direct competitors.

- Gauge levels of content dedicated to a long-tail keyword.

Inurl:

Like with Intitle & Intext, Google will only return results where the search words are included in the URL. This will often drastically reduce search volume and can be handy for finding potential direct competitors.

Use this search operator to:

- Find direct competitors.

- Filter out bad results.

- Find backlink opportunities.

Allinurl:

All words included in the search query must be in the URL to become a result. For long search phrases, this often returns only a handful or no results at all.

Use this search operator to:

- Filter out bad results for popular topics.

Example - <u>allinurl:apple airpods</u>

Filetype:

Filetype: tells Google to return only results of, you guessed it, a specific type of file. It is useful when looking for research, which is often in PDF or other document file formats, rather than HTML.

Use this search operator to:

- Quickly find original research, statistics and case studies on a certain topic.

Related:

Related: is an operator that helps you find sites related to a specified URL. Using it is an illuminating look into how Google categorizes your website and your competitors.

For example, if we take a look at the results for airbnb.com, it returns the usual SEO suspects, but also some peripheral competitors for attention.

Obviously, Airbnb's two biggest competitors VRBO and Homeaway made the cut, but there's something else. A more generalist booking website is listed as well. So from that, we learn that Google understands the categorical hierarchy of SEO inside of online travel.

Use this search operator to:

- Find competitors.

- Understand how Google is categorizing your site.

AROUND(X)

Limit results to pages that contain search words within X words of each other. Useful for finding quotes and song lyrics you don't quite remember, but not much else. Google will bold the phrases it thinks you are looking for, not just the search words. (Note: It defines a range with a max of X, not just X.)

Use this search operator to:

- Find quotes you only vaguely remember.

- Find official statements/case studies/research that back up a point you want to make.

Basic Search Operators

Google's basic search operators help filter the results you get from your search.

You should be familiar with every single one of these, so consider this a review, not a lesson. (As such the descriptions will be brief and there are no screenshots to explain.)

"" (Quotes)

Putting your search term in quotes initiates an exact match search for that phrase. The exact words in that exact order have to be on the page or. Using it on single words excludes synonyms and related words.

Example - "Elon Musk"

AND

Google will search for results related to both/all terms that you've typed in the search field. Typically Google's algorithm will correctly estimate whether it's a phrase search or multiple separate terms, making AND mostly redundant.

Example - seo AND content

-

The hyphen (like a minus sign) helps you exclude words from your search queries. For example, you can search for "SEO California" but exclude "LA" if you don't want results from that city.

Example - "SEO California -Los -Angeles -LA"

*

The asterisk tells Google to "fill in the blank". Similar to the more advanced AROUND(X) but you don't specify the max length of a phrase. Like AROUND(X) it can be useful for finding quotes and phrases.

Example - Elon * Tesla

()

Brackets group together terms or search operators to help structure an advanced search.

Example - allinurl: SEO (Los Angeles OR San Diego OR San Francisco).

OR / |

OR or | (pipe) tells Google a certain word in the query can be interchanged for another. Typically best used with brackets like in the example above.

Example - Musk OR bezos

$ / €

This operator helps you search for products by price.

Example - iPhone 8 Plus 400$

#..#

Putting two dots between two years creates a Google search command for results that fall within that year range.

Example - <u>ted talks 2016..2020</u>

Google Content / Card Operators

Google and SEO sites classify these as search operators. But, they interact with Google's own content/function and don't necessarily trigger an internet search.

- Define:
- Cache:
- Weather:
- Stocks:
- Map:
- Movie:
- In / To

They might not be useful for research purposes, but understanding is a piece of the puzzle having a holistic understanding of Google search.

More Actionable Things You Can Do with Search Operators

Quickly Gauge Competitiveness Of Long-Tail Keywords

For over 10 years we've known that the long tail is actually the bigger piece of the pie.

More than <u>50% of searches</u> are 3 words **or longer**.
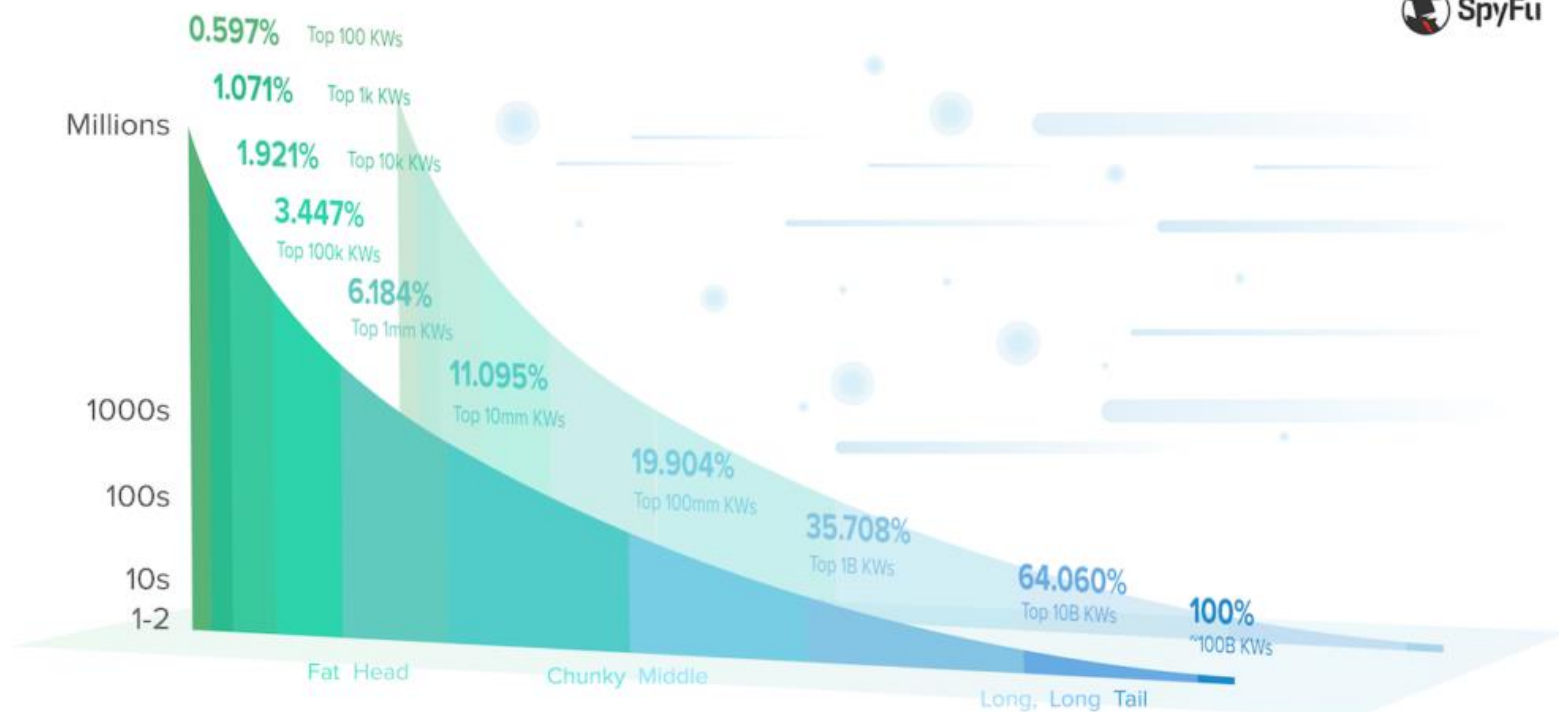
Search and the Long Tail

60% of Google searches are made for queries that are not even in the **top 1 BILLION** most popular ones.
Let that sink in.

That speaks to the importance of long tail keywords. Finding and capitalizing on the long tail is key to your SEO success.

When you think of long tail keywords, check the field for anyone who's there already. Google makes it simple for you to gauge competitiveness for specific terms with the operator "allintitle".

For example, let's say you had a new content idea and you wanted to target the phrase "SEO small business San Diego". You could quickly do an allintitle search.

(image source)

The results tell you that there are already 100 websites that have a dedicated page to this search term.

A Google search like this can be a useful indicator to quickly qualify keywords before you write them down into your content plan.

If you are looking for more complete insights into competitive metrics, though, try keyword tools like SpyFu where special commands are built in as features. For example, typing a domain into the Keyword Research search bar acts as a search operator to uncover the keywords that the domain ranks for and the keywords they buy. It's a simple but effective step that helps you find results just like a special Google search command.

We recently covered competitive analysis on the blog, and how you can use the tools we provide to know everything about your competition. If you need help finding keyword ideas, we can also help with that.

Long tail keywords are an integral part of SEO strategy, and while doing an operator qualified search is good for quick insights, it doesn't go as in-depth as our tools.

Find Statistics & Research To Enhance Your Content
76.7 million pieces of content were published in February alone on WordPress.com blogs. That's more than 2,7 million a day, and it's not even the entire internet.

This simple statistic shows you the most important thing about content; there's too much of it.

And it's confusing the end users. Trust in online reviews decreased significantly from 2015-2018. It declined from 31% who unequivocally believed in all reviews in 2015, down to 19% in 2018.
This decline was likely caused by the incredible increase in Amazon Associates and other affiliate websites.

These sites often have fake or dubious reviews, and this has impacted the reputation of the web as a whole. Bounce rates for many sites are increasing as it gets harder to gain user trust and attention.

But you need to get it if you want to conquer the top of Google SERPs. Results in the top 3 tend to have a lower than 45% bounce rate.
There's too much content out there, and people are suffering from information overload. And people have less trust in internet content as there is more of it and they recognize less.

Why should they read yours?

How do you pique interest and gain trust in one move? How can you reduce bounce rates with the content itself?
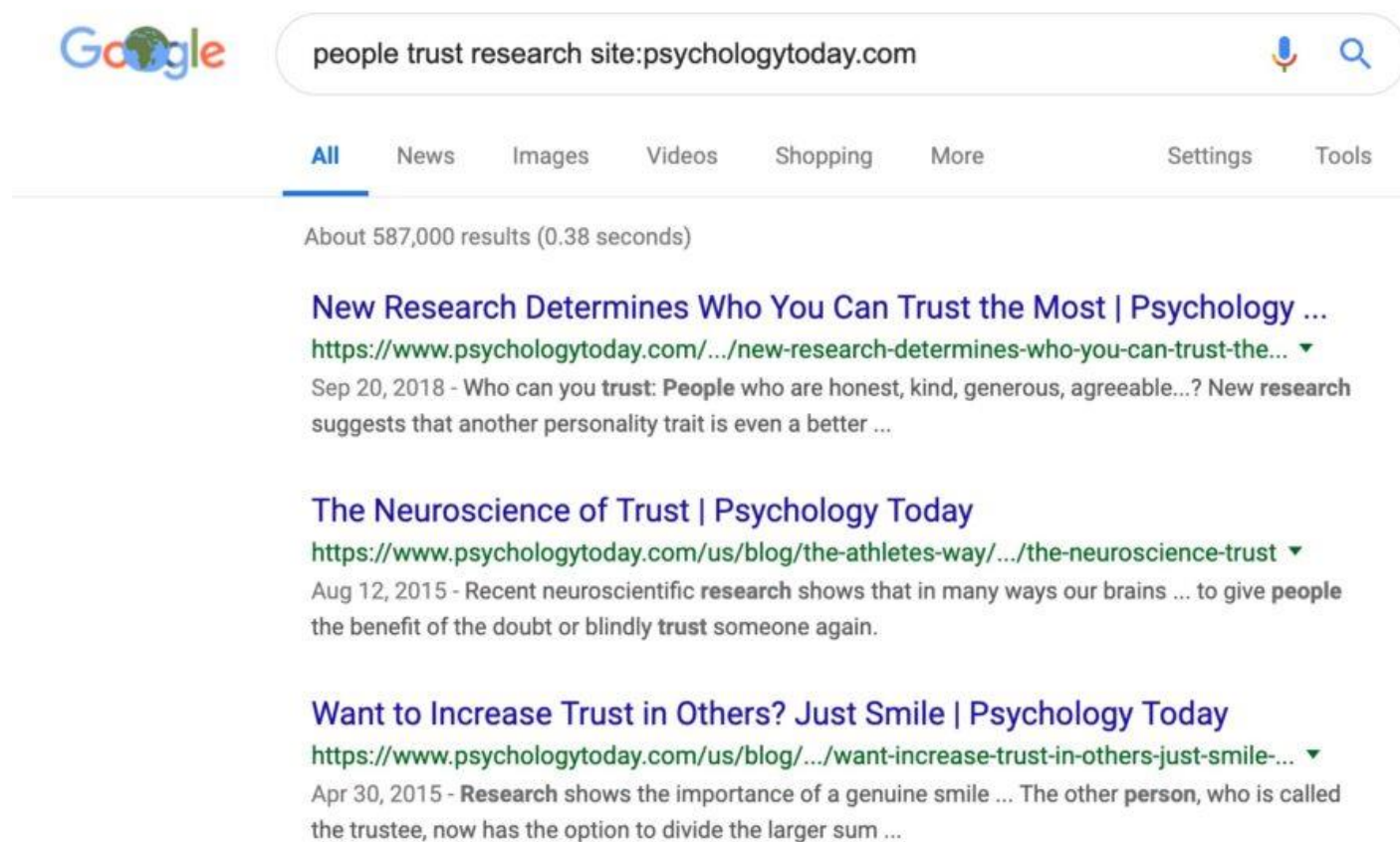
Statistics from a reliable source. Borrowed trust.

When you read this section of the post, the first thing you saw was a statistic sourced to the blog giant WordPress. If anyone has reliable data on the internet and content, it's them.

So I borrowed their trustworthiness to level up my content.

Google makes it easy to do the same for any topic.

Specify the trustworthy site you want to source research to when you search for statistics.

Google

people trust research site:psychologytoday.com

All   News   Images   Videos   Shopping   More   Settings   Tools

About 587,000 results (0.38 seconds)

New Research Determines Who You Can Trust the Most | Psychology ...
https://www.psychologytoday.com/.../new-research-determines-who-you-can-trust-the... ▼
Sep 20, 2018 - Who can you **trust**: **People** who are honest, kind, generous, agreeable...? New **research** suggests that another personality trait is even a better ...

The Neuroscience of Trust | Psychology Today
https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-athletes-way/.../the-neuroscience-trust ▼
Aug 12, 2015 - Recent neuroscientific **research** shows that in many ways our brains ... to give **people** the benefit of the doubt or blindly **trust** someone again.

Want to Increase Trust in Others? Just Smile | Psychology Today
https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/.../want-increase-trust-in-others-just-smile-... ▼
Apr 30, 2015 - **Research** shows the importance of a genuine smile ... The other **person**, who is called the trustee, now has the option to divide the larger sum ...

(image source)

You can even search through multiple sources at once using brackets and |.

[(image source)](#).

Using this Google search command lets you find the combination of research and source that you want.

Statistics alone are no longer enough.

A reliable, interesting statistic, however, can help take your content to the next level.

Find Glaring Indexation Errors & Other SEO Issues

In a recent SEO study, 175 million websites were checked, and they found [300 million SEO errors](#). Almost 10% of the sites had issues with duplicated content or canonical tags.

Translation: Most websites have SEO errors, even with increased spending on SEO and content marketing.

Even Apple has pages on HTTP despite HTTPS being an official ranking factor for crying out loud. (And indexed pages for discontinued services.)
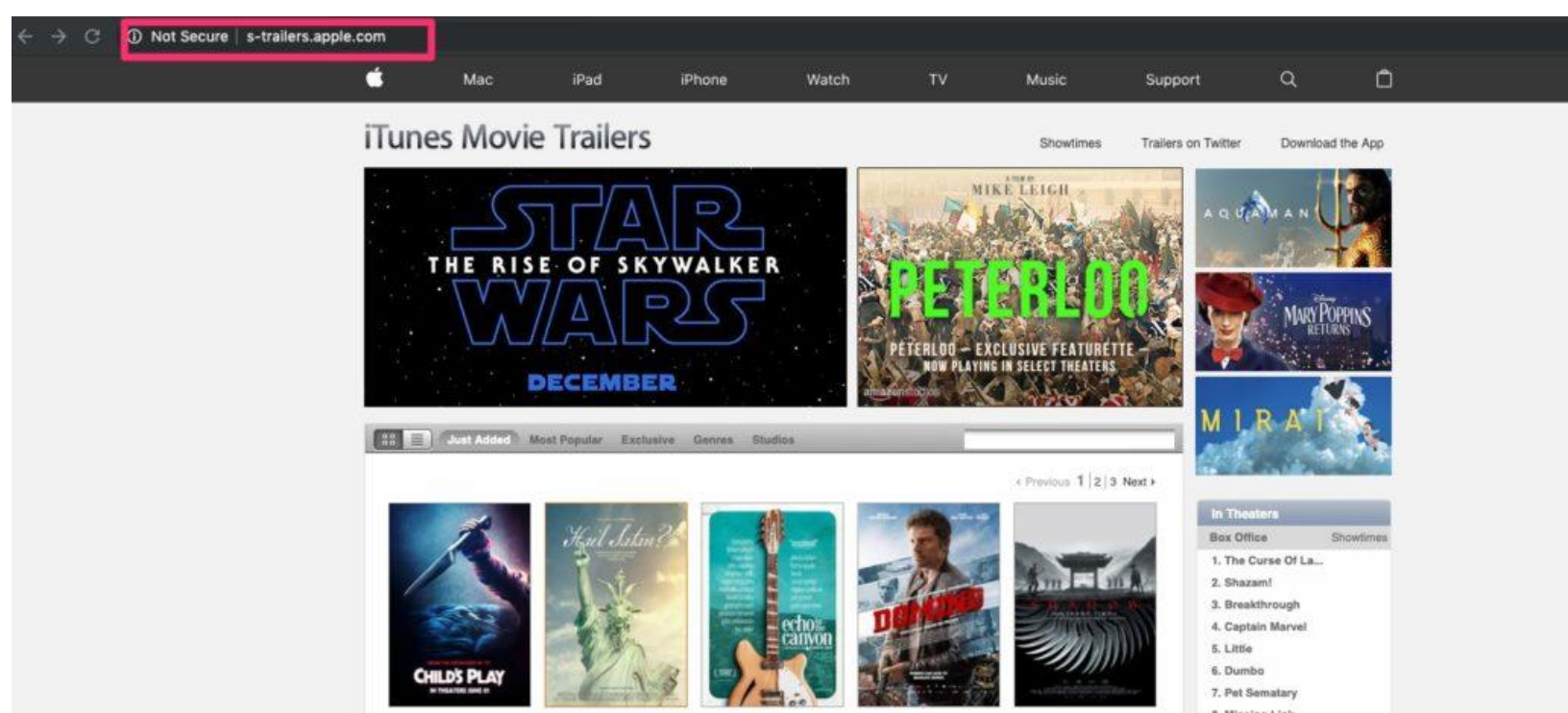
[(image source)](image source).

Sometimes the big dedicated budget can be the problem.

When larger companies have separate content teams in different departments, it can be hard to coordinate and make sure everything is up to snuff.

Even the most profitable company on the planet makes mistakes here.

One easy step you can take to find and fix insecure pages is to use the search command "site:YOURSITE.com -inurl:https."

That is exactly how I quickly found an HTTP page on apple.com.

Another common issue is double indexing, but you can check for duplicate content with the Google site search command.

Again, the site: operator comes to the rescue.

Common offenders:
  - Product descriptions.
  - Case studies used on multiple pages.
  - Long CTAs with short unique content on various pages.

A quick search for duplicate product entries for sennheiser.com shows that they are in the clear.

If you work with clients that have big content budgets, or large ecommerce sites, it's important to do these kinds of checks regularly.

You can even teach non-SEO members of the team to use Google Search operators to do these kinds of tests.

That way you can effectively share the responsibility and improve the organizations SEO as a whole.

Find Backlink & Content Opportunities

High-quality backlinks are still one of the most reliable ranking factors out there.

In a 2018 study, more Backlinks still had the strongest correlation with higher rankings compared to any other factor. On average, the 1st result had over 700% the number of backlinks of result 10. And over 300% the amount of referring domains.

SpyFu

Backlinks are still the most reliable ranking factor

The top result has 700% more backlinks than nr. 10 on average.

Translation: a diverse backlink portfolio is still incredibly important in 2020.

But backlinks don't just appear out of thin air.

Buying them isn't an option (Google more than frowns upon this), and people don't just hand them out for free either.

You have to do your research.

Maybe you even use some basic search operators to help you already.

But some advanced combinations can speed up your search dramatically.

If you combine intitle: with inurl: you can often eliminate 100% of the fluff from search results, and find resource/link pages that you need.

(Note: Allin operators tend not to play nicely together, so stick to in.)

Screenshot of <u>example search</u> on Google.
You can also quickly find authority sites who have done reviews or comparison posts that don't include your service or product.

This can be done using a combination of OR and removing your own brand names with the hyphen -.

For example: "laptop vs (macbook OR hp OR Huawei) -dell".

Example search on Google.

This phrase would help an SEO or content manager at dell quickly identify opportunities in the tech blogosphere.

Of course, site: also comes in handy here, as you can check whether or not industry websites have covered your products yet.

All in all, Google is an excellent tool for this, but it can be very time consuming to do the checking and ideation manually.

SpyFu helps you identify backlink opportunities with much less sweat required.

The Officially Retired Search Operators

These inactive search operators no longer work. Some have officially been discontinued or deprecated, and others were attached to Google properties that have since been shut down.

Link: operator

Old school SEOs will fondly remember this one. In the past, you could use the "link:" operator to find pages linking to a specified URL. Google officially discontinued this operator back in 2017.

Tip: One workaround for this lives inside the SpyFu backlinks feature. Type the domain into the search bar, and just like with the past Google search operator, you

will see the pages that link to it.

Other Deprecated Search Operators:

- +
- ~
- inpostauthor:
- allinpostauthor:
- inposttitle:
- info:
- daterange:
- phonebook:
- #
- blogurl:
- inanchor:
- allinanchor:
- loc:placename
- location:

Google is continually working on new things and discarding old projects. So don't expect the list above to stay the same for very long.

They typically dispense of advanced and rarely used search operators without any prior warning at all, so make sure you get the most out of them while you still can.

Conclusion

While SEO tools and APIs are getting more and more sophisticated, it never hurts to go back to our roots as SEOs.

By using the Google search algorithm yourself, you get first-hand experience as a consumer, whilst also working on fixing SEO problems for yourself, or your client.

Sometimes the best ideas come to us at the worst times, and by learning to do the basics with only Google, you have the ability to instantly check & improve your SEO from the comfort of your search engine.

6. Find resource page opportunities

"Resource" pages round-up the best resources on a topic.

Here's what a so-called "resource" page looks like:

53 Broken Link Building Resources

A Round-Up

SHARE THIS: f   🐦   in   ✉   g+

I'm currently at work on a sort of "multi-tool" for large scale broken link building. Obviously I'm learning by doing, but reading definitely adds to my education that culminated in the launch of the Broken Link Building tool! If you are a broken link builder you should definitely go check it out :)

All of those links you see = links to resources on other sites.

(Ironically—given the subject nature of that particular page—a lot of those links are broken)

FURTHER READING

- [A Simple (But Complete) Guide to Broken Link Building](#)
- [How to Find and Fix Broken Links (to Reclaim Valuable "Link Juice")](#)

So if you have a cool resource on your site, you can:

1. find relevant "resource" pages;
2. pitch your resource for inclusion

Here's one way to find them:

    fitness (intitle:"resources" | inurl:resources)   🎤   🔍

But that can return a lot of junk.

Here's a cool way to narrow it down:

    intitle:fitness AND intitle:resources AND inurl:resources   🎤   🔍

Or narrow it down even further with:

    allintitle:fitness 5|6|7|8|9|10|11|12|13|14|15 resources   🎤   🔍

SIDENOTE.

Using `allintitle:` here ensures that the title tag contains the words "fitness" AND "resources," and also a number between 5–15.

A NOTE ABOUT THE #..# OPERATOR

I know what you're thinking:

Why not use the `#..#` operator instead of that long sequence of numbers.

Good point!

Let's try it:

allintitle:fitness 5..15 resources	🎤	🔍

All	News	Images	Maps	Shopping	More		Settings	Tools

3 results (0.19 seconds)

Confused? Here's the deal:

This operator doesn't play nicely with most other operators.

Nor does it seem to work a lot of the time anyway—it's definitely hit and miss.

So I recommend using a sequence of numbers separated by "OR" or the pipe ("|") operator.

It's a bit of a hassle, but it works.

8. Find more link prospects… AND check how relevant they *really* are

Let's assume you've found a site that you want a link from.

It's been manually vetted for relevance… and all looks good.

Here's how to find a list of similar sites or pages:

related:ahrefs.com/blog	🎤	🔍

This returned ~49 results—all of which were similar sites.

WANT TO DO THE SAME FOR SPECIFIC PAGES? NO PROBLEM

Let's try our [link building guide](#).
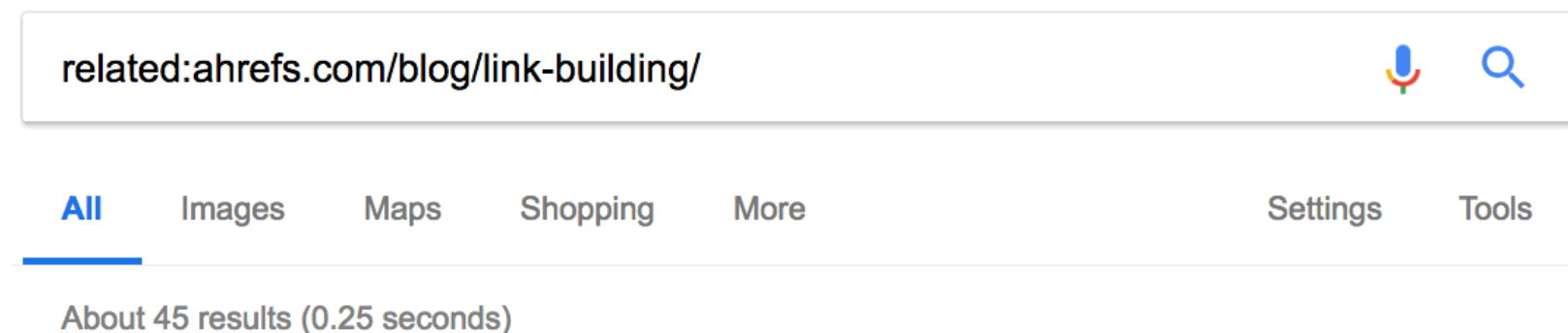
That's ~45 results, all of which are *very* similar. ☺
Here's one of the results: *yoast.com/seo-blog*

I'm quite familiar with Yoast, so I know it's a relevant site/prospect.

But let's assume that I know nothing about this site, how could I quickly vet this prospect?

Here's how:

1. do a `site:domain.com` search, and note down the number of results;
2. do a `site:domain.com [niche]` search, then also note down the number of results;
3. divide the second number by the first—if it's above 0.5, it's a good, relevant prospect; if it's above 0.75, it's a super-relevant prospect.

Let's try this with *yoast.com*.

Here's the number of results for a simple `site:` search:
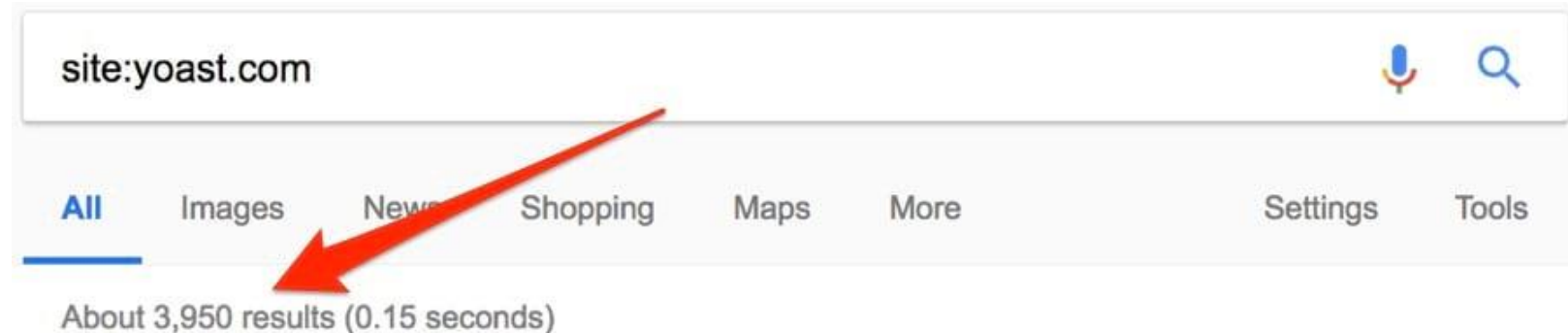
And `site: [niche]`:
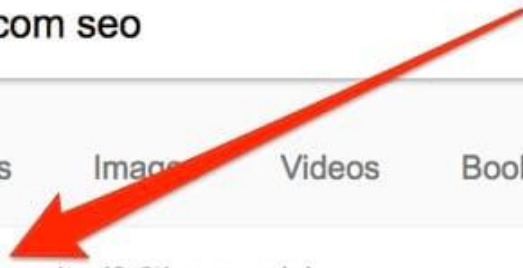
So that's **3,950 / 3,330 = ~0.84**.

(Remember, >0.75 translates to a very relevant prospect, usually)

Now let's try the same for a site that I know to be irrelevant: *greatist.com*.

Number of results for `site:greatist.com` **search: ~**18,000

Number of results for `site:greatist.com SEO` **search: ~**7

(18,000 / 7 = ~0.0004 = a totally irrelevant site)

IMPORTANT! This is a great way to quick eliminate highly-irrelevant tactics, but it's not foolproof— you will sometimes get strange or unenlightening results. I also want to stress that it's certainly no replacement for manually checking a potential prospect's website. You should ALWAYS thoroughly check a prospects site before reaching out to them. Failure to do that = SPAMMING.

HERE'S ANOTHER WAY TO FIND SIMILAR DOMAINS/PROSPECTS...

Site Explorer > *relevant domain* > *Competing Domains*

For example, let's assume I was looking for more SEO-related link prospects.

I could enter *ahrefs.com/blog* into Site Explorer.

Then check the Competing Domains.

17,507	6,560	112,942		searchenginewatch.com ▾
18,641	5,426	29,902		backlinko.com ▾
19,164	4,903	7,143,764		google.com ▾
19,232	4,835	42,705		semrush.com ▾
19,408	4,659	169,180		shoutmeloud.com ▾
19,721	4,346	21,113		hobo-web.co.uk ▾
19,931	4,136	291,912		labnol.org ▾
20,460	3,607	5,740		siegemedia.com ▾
21,201	2,866	400,104		bufferapp.com ▾

This will reveal domains competing for the same keywords.

---

prospects

Got someone in mind that you want to reach out to?

Try this trick to find their contact details:

tim soulo ahrefs (site:twitter.com | site:facebook.com | site:linkedin.com)

SIDENOTE.
 You NEED to know their name for this one. This is usually quite easy to find on most websites—it's just the contact details that can be somewhat elusive.

Here are the top 4 results:

fea

Tim Soulo (@timsoulo) | Twitter
https://twitter.com/timsoulo ▾
Head of marketing & product strategy at @ahrefs - SEO toolset powered by seriously Big Data. ...
ahrefs.com/tim. ... Tim Soulo @timsoulo 4 Oct 2017.

Tim Soulo - Head of Marketing / Product Strategy - Ahrefs | LinkedIn
https://sg.linkedin.com/in/timsoulo ▾
Ahrefs.com is a very powerful toolset for SEOs and online marketers. ... BloggerJet.com - is my personal blog, where I talk about online marketing, blogging, SEO, conversion optimisation and tons of other cool stuff. ... View Tim Soulo's full profile to...

Ahrefs (@ahrefs) | Twitter
https://twitter.com/ahrefs ▾
The latest Tweets from Ahrefs (@ahrefs). #SEO toolset powered by the best and most complete data in the industry. See for yourself: https://t.co/Ho1mFGc0PS. Singapore.

Tim Soulo | Facebook
https://www.facebook.com/timsoulo ▾
To connect with Tim, sign up for Facebook today. Log In. or. Sign Up. About Tim Soulo. Work. Ahrefs. Marketer. Current City and Hometown. Singapore. Current city. Favorites. Music. Boris Roodbwoy. Games. OwlAge. Athletes. Vasyl Lomachenko / Василий Ломаченко. Sports Teams. Kitoons. Other. Valery Nechaiev ...

BINGO.

You can then contact them directly via social media.

Or use some of the tips from steps #4 and #6 in this article to hunt down an email address.