***PowerSearchingWithGoogle.com***

**Lesson 1.4: The Art of Keyword Choice**

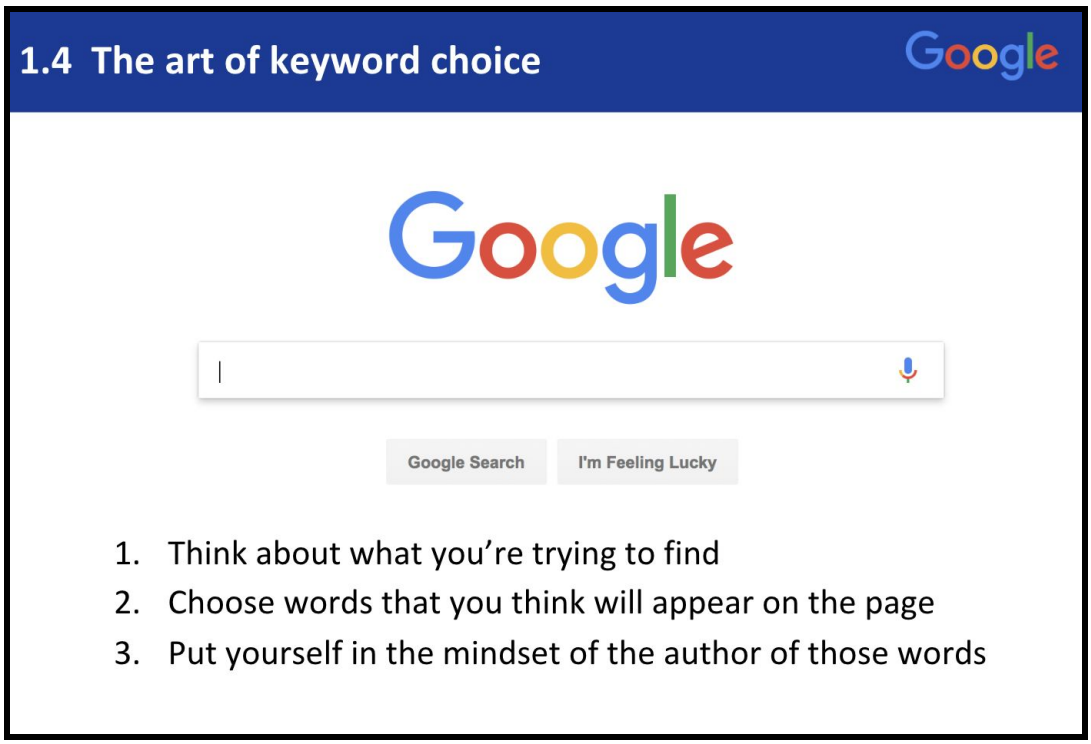
Access Lesson 1.4 slides here

**Contents:**

*Think about what you're trying to find*

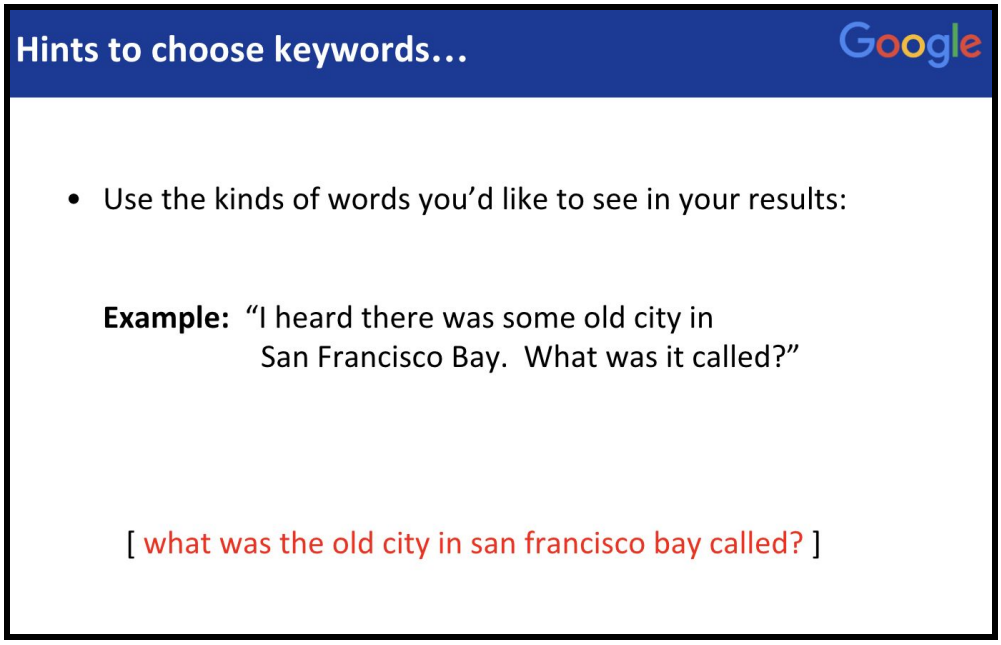
*Choose words that you think will appear on the page*
*Put yourself in the mindset of the author of those words*

This is lesson 1.4 and this is really all about the art of keyword choice. I call it an art because it's not yet a science, and so this is one of those things where your experience and your practice will improve with time. We're going to talk about some of the details of the art in this lesson because we're really trying to teach you how to choose good keywords for your query.

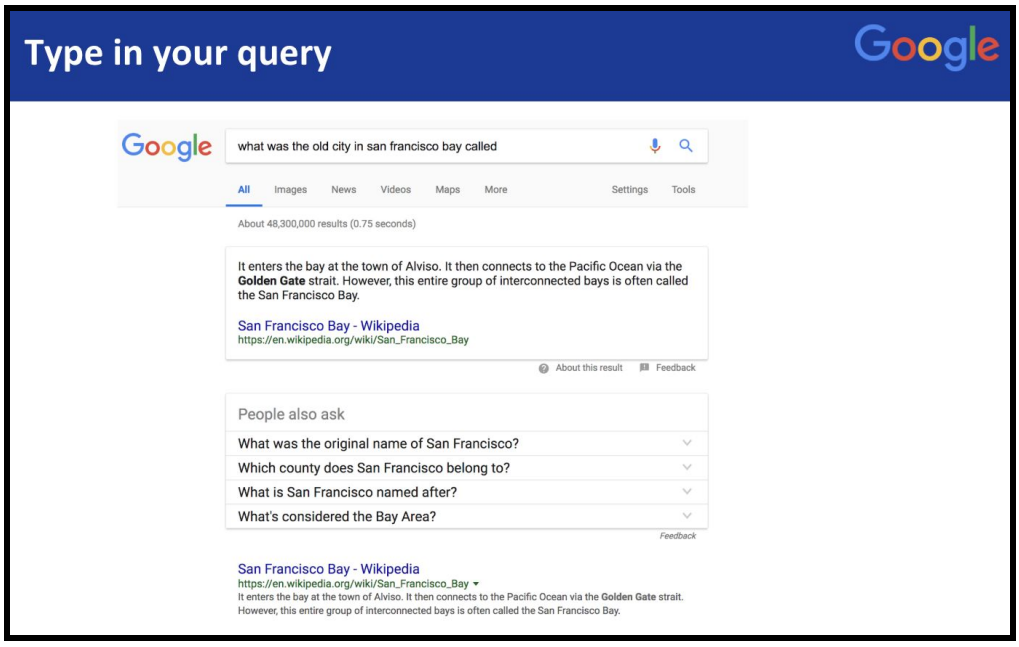



Here's the first thing I want you to know: Think about what it is you're trying to find. So what we're going to practice is the process of going from this vague abstraction, this kind of a general idea and just distilling it down. What is it you're really trying to find? Try to eliminate the peripheral and focus on the center. One way to do that is to choose words that you think will appear on the perfect page, so in essence this is not about what *you* think about the problem...what you think about your query, but what someone else would be writing about that topic. So you want to boil that down; try to get to the essence of the idea. What you really want to do is put yourself in the mindset of the author of the perfect webpage, so it's not about what you think - it's about what that person would write, because you're trying to match your query terms to the contents of the perfect webpage.

So here's an example: someone comes to me and says, "Hi, I heard there was this old city in San Francisco Bay; people lived there and then they left. What was it called?"

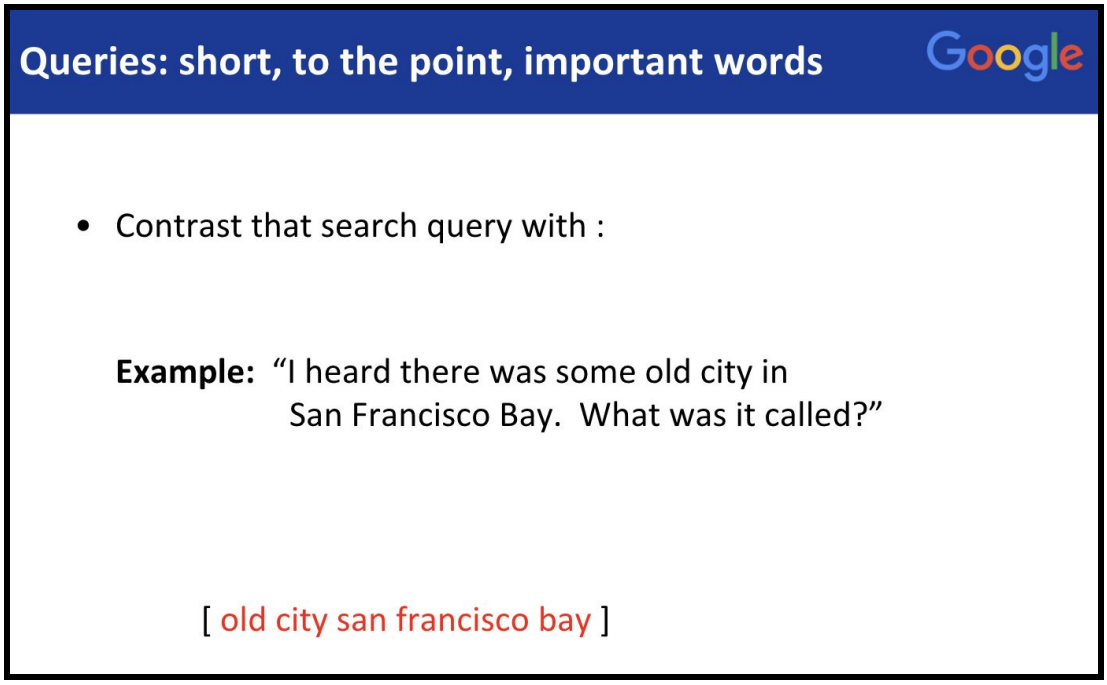



So one way to think about this art of key word choice is to go from the general question, the idea of what you want to look for and boil it down, that is try to identify the keywords. So one way you could do this is to write out the question the way you see here: what was the old city in San Francisco Bay called?

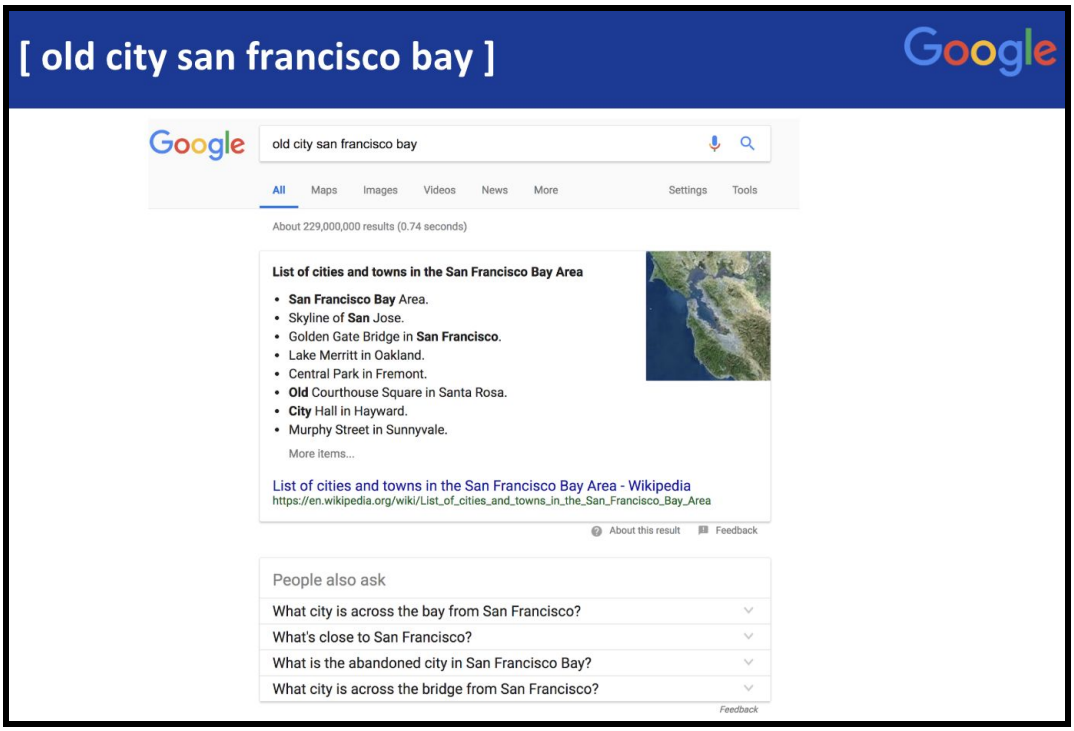



You go to Google and type that in and you get results that are okay, but it doesn't have the whole idea of the city that's been lost, where everyone has left and so on, so these results are good but they're not exactly what I'm looking for. How can I

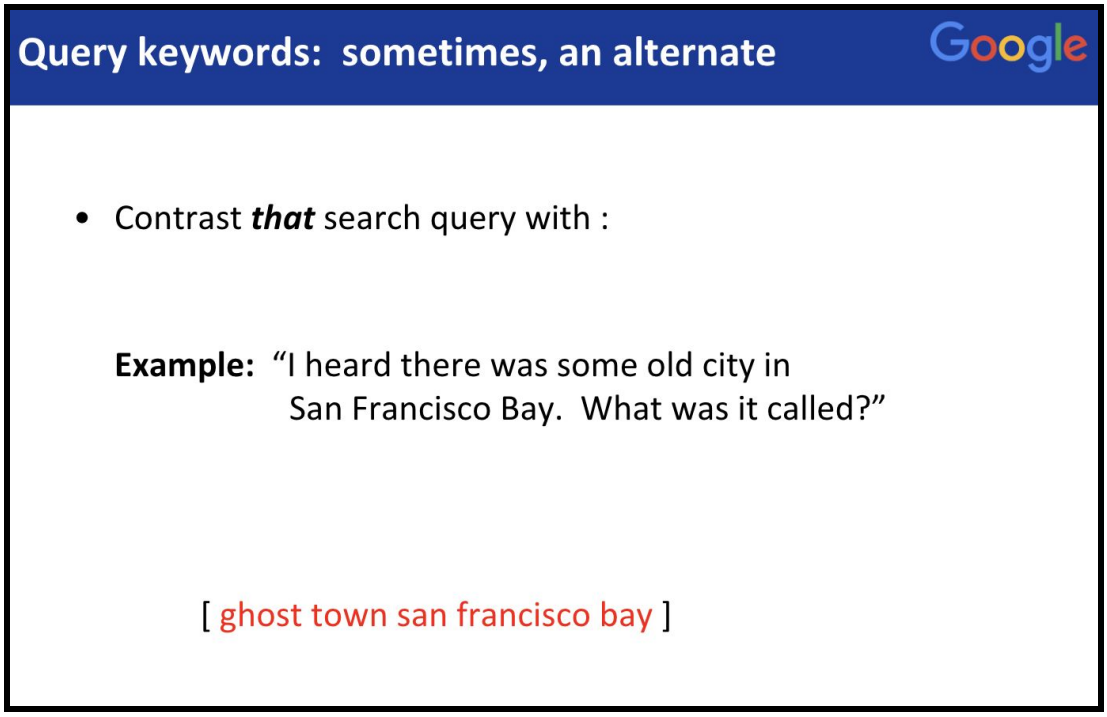
boil the idea down? One way to do that would be to remove the extraneous terms; in essence I'm trying to find the high-value most salient, really great words, the great key terms. So here, let's rewrite the query to be old city San Francisco Bay and try that.



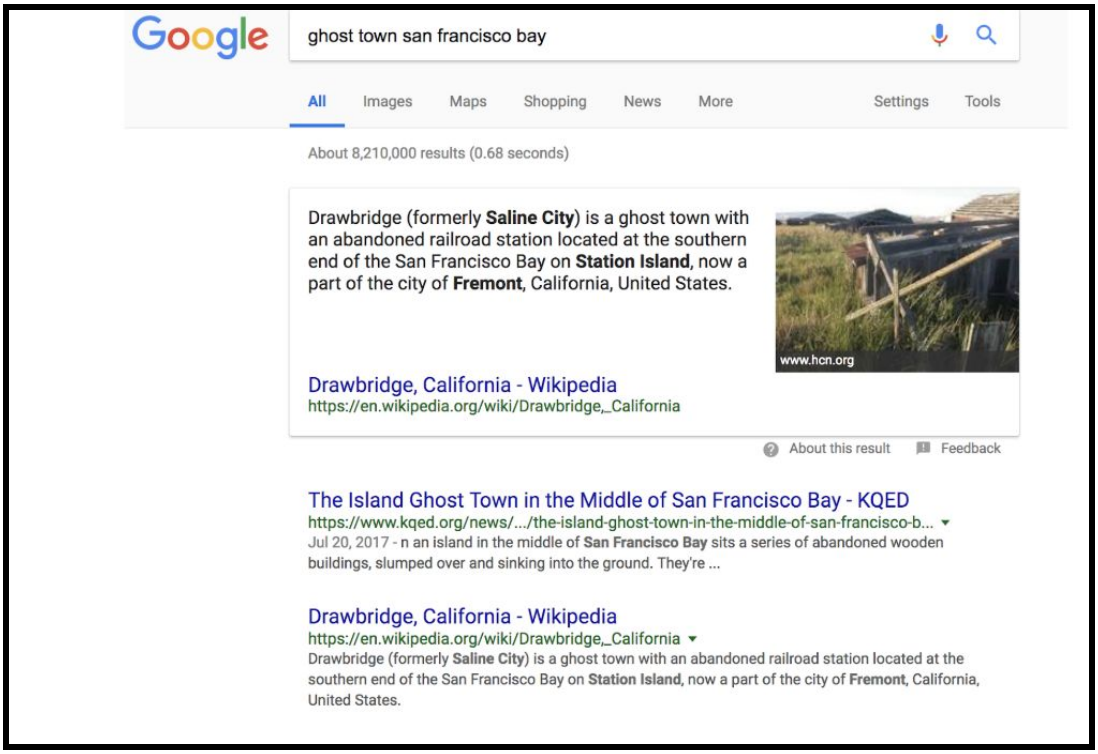

This is an interesting idea with respect to the art of keyword choice. Sometimes you have to do it two or three times to rewrite the query to get one that actually works well. So let's try that.



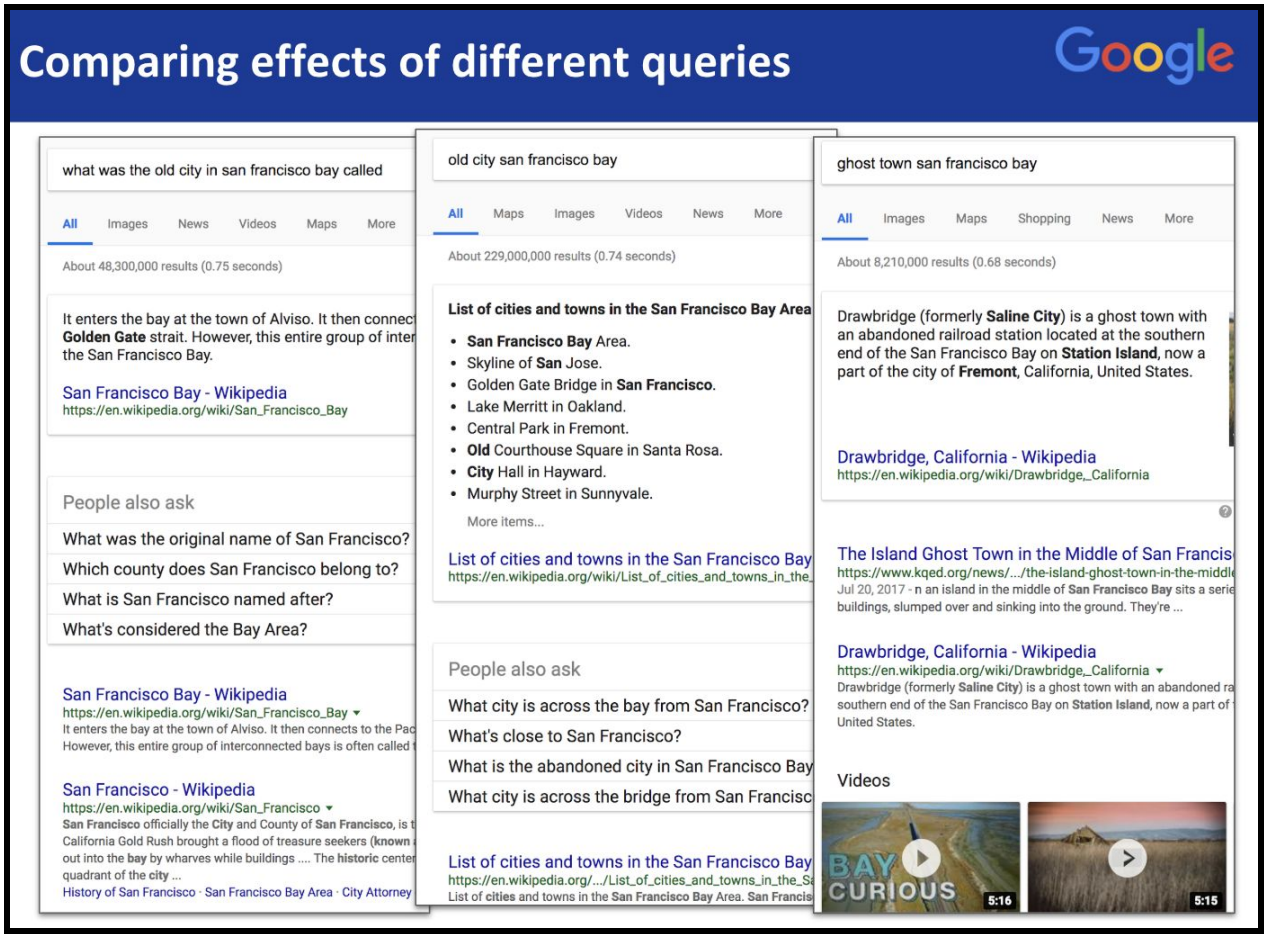
Now when you see the results we've got something else slightly different; it's a list of cities around San Francisco Bay and that's fine, but again it's not what I'm looking for. How can we change it yet again? Here's what I did this time...thinking what would a city be called if everybody left? That sounds like a ghost town or maybe abandoned town or something, you want to capture that idea in your keywords. So here I wrote [ghost town San Francisco Bay]



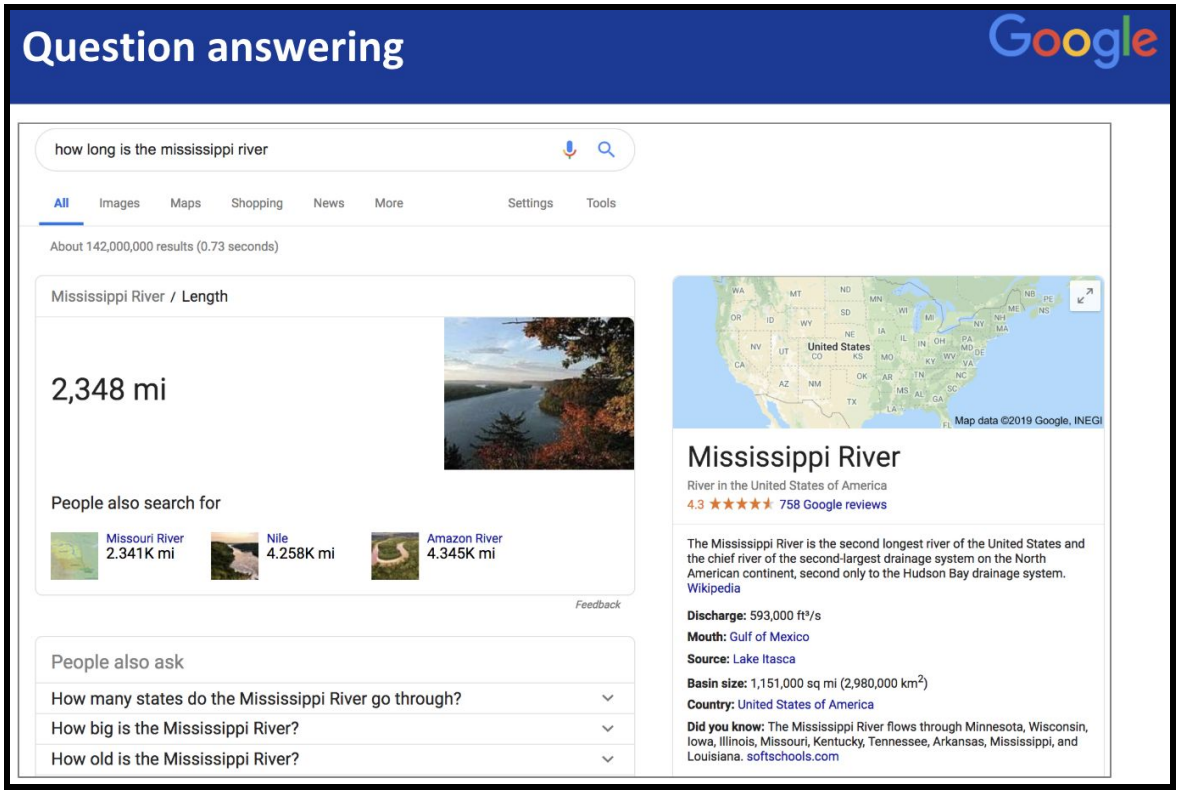

Once you add ghost town all of a sudden now I get exactly what I was looking for, this city Drawbridge, formerly Saline city, is a ghost town with an abandoned railroad station, so on and so on. This is the perfect result.



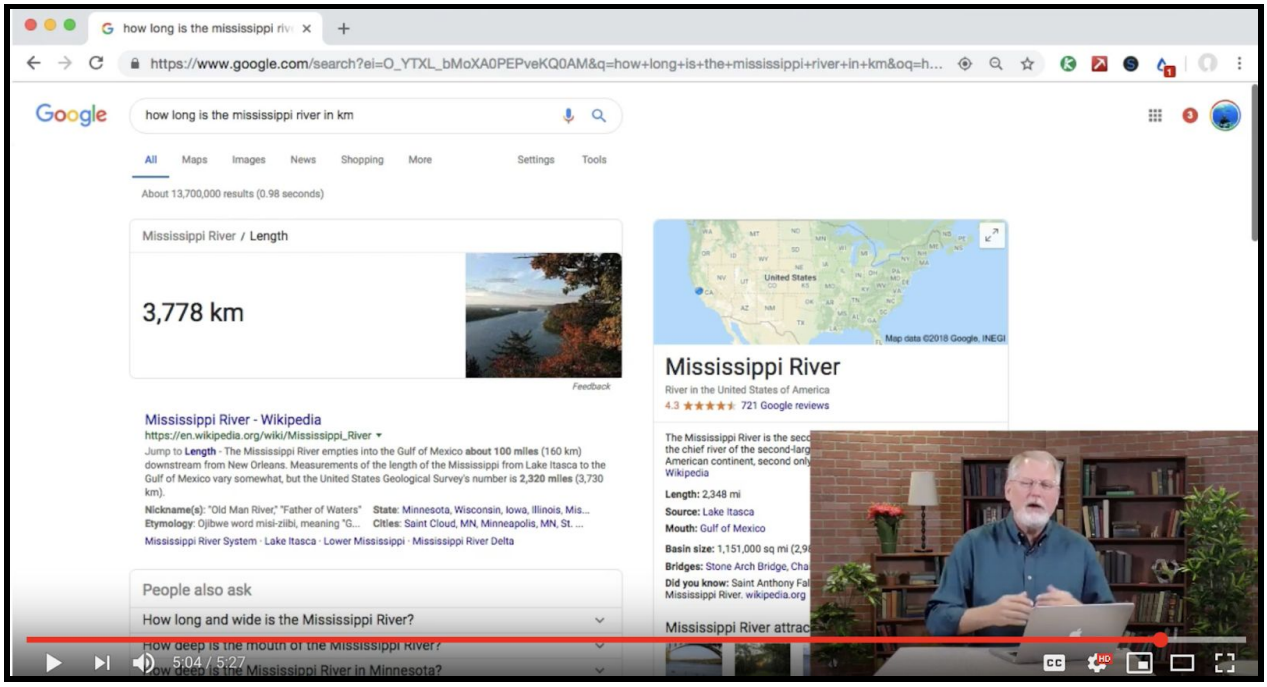

So what I had to do was start with a vague general description of what it is I was looking for, boil it down to the key terms and when those weren't working I had to add a term that was very specific to exactly the question I was trying to resolve.




When we compare these three different styles, these three different queries we made, we start with a very general open one on the left which didn't really work. Then we got a little more specific in the second, and that was a little better and finally when we added that precise term ghost town (abandoned town would work too) we got exactly the answer we wanted. Now that's the traditional way of doing keyword choice. Google is getting better with time and so now we have this thing called *question answering* so if you have a question that has a pretty clear answer that can be extracted from some web page go ahead and try it.




For example, here we have [how long is the Mississippi River] and you can see the result here is shown as a simple answer. There's a knowledge panel on the right that gives you additional information, but let me show this to you live, because I want to show a particular point. So here we are in Google I'm going to say how long is the Mississippi River and as you saw it gives you exactly the right answer, but if you're in Europe or anywhere else in the world other than the United States you probably think in kilometers so I'm going to modify the query; click up here and add [in km].




Again this is the kind of thing that can be easily extracted from a webpage, so go ahead and ask a question like that, maybe you'll find exactly the right answer for you immediately without having to do a lot of refinement. Now what I'd like you to do, now that you know the art of keyword choice and question asking, is go ahead, click on the arrow below and see if you can't practice your art of keyword choice.

Power Searching with Google © 2019 Google, Inc. CC-BY-SA
(Updated 1/5/19 A. Awakuni Fernald)