

PowerSearchingWithGoogle.com

Lesson 1.4: The Art of Keyword Choice

[Access Lesson 1.4 slides here](#)

Contents:

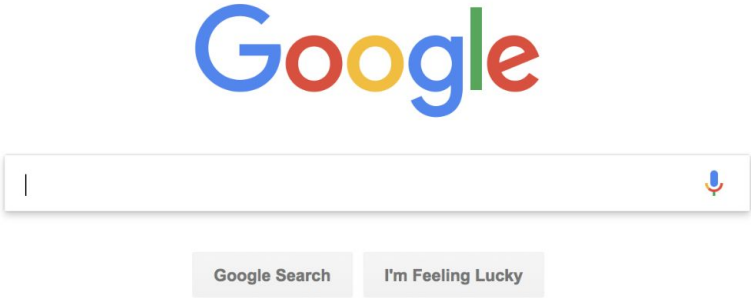

Think about what you're trying to find

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.

1.4 The art of keyword choice




1. Think about what you're trying to find
2. Choose words that you think will appear on the page
3. Put yourself in the mindset of the author of those words

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?"

Hints to choose keywords...




- Use the kinds of words you'd like to see in your results:

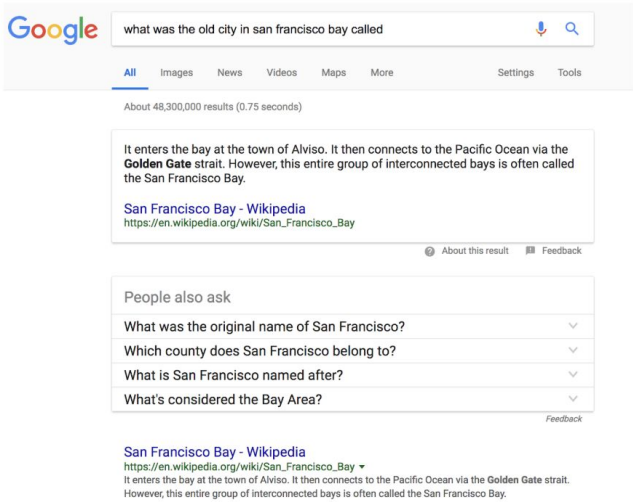
Example: "I heard there was some old city in San Francisco Bay. What was it called?"

[what was the old city in san francisco bay 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?

Type in your query





The screenshot shows a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text "what was the old city in san francisco bay called". Below the search bar, there are tabs for "All", "Images", "News", "Videos", "Maps", "More", "Settings", and "Tools". The search results show "About 48,300,000 results (0.75 seconds)". The first result is a snippet from Wikipedia: "It enters the bay at the town of Alviso. It then connects to the Pacific Ocean via the Golden Gate strait. However, this entire group of interconnected bays is often called the San Francisco Bay." Below this is a link to "San Francisco Bay - Wikipedia" with the URL "https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco_Bay". There are also links for "About this result" and "Feedback". Below the first result is a section titled "People also ask" with four questions: "What was the original name of San Francisco?", "Which county does San Francisco belong to?", "What is San Francisco named after?", and "What's considered the Bay Area?". Each question has a dropdown arrow. At the bottom, there is another link to "San Francisco Bay - Wikipedia" with the URL "https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco_Bay" and a snippet of text: "It enters the bay at the town of Alviso. It then connects to the Pacific Ocean via the Golden Gate strait. However, this entire group of interconnected bays is often called the San Francisco Bay."

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.

Queries: short, to the point, important words

Google

- Contrast that search query with :

Example: “I heard there was some old city in San Francisco Bay. What was it called?”

[old city san francisco bay]

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.

[old city san francisco bay]

Google

Google

old city san francisco bay

All

Maps

Images

Videos

News

More

Settings

Tools

About 229,000,000 results (0.74 seconds)

List of cities and towns in the San Francisco Bay Area

- San Francisco Bay Area.
- Skyline of San Jose.
- Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco.
- Lake Merritt in Oakland.
- Central Park in Fremont.
- Old Courthouse Square in Santa Rosa.
- City Hall in Hayward.
- Murphy Street in Sunnyvale.

More items...

List of cities and towns in the San Francisco Bay Area - Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cities_and_towns_in_the_San_Francisco_Bay_Area

About this result Feedback

People also ask

What city is across the bay from San Francisco?


What's close to San Francisco?

What is the abandoned city in San Francisco Bay?

What city is across the bridge from San Francisco?

Feedback

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]

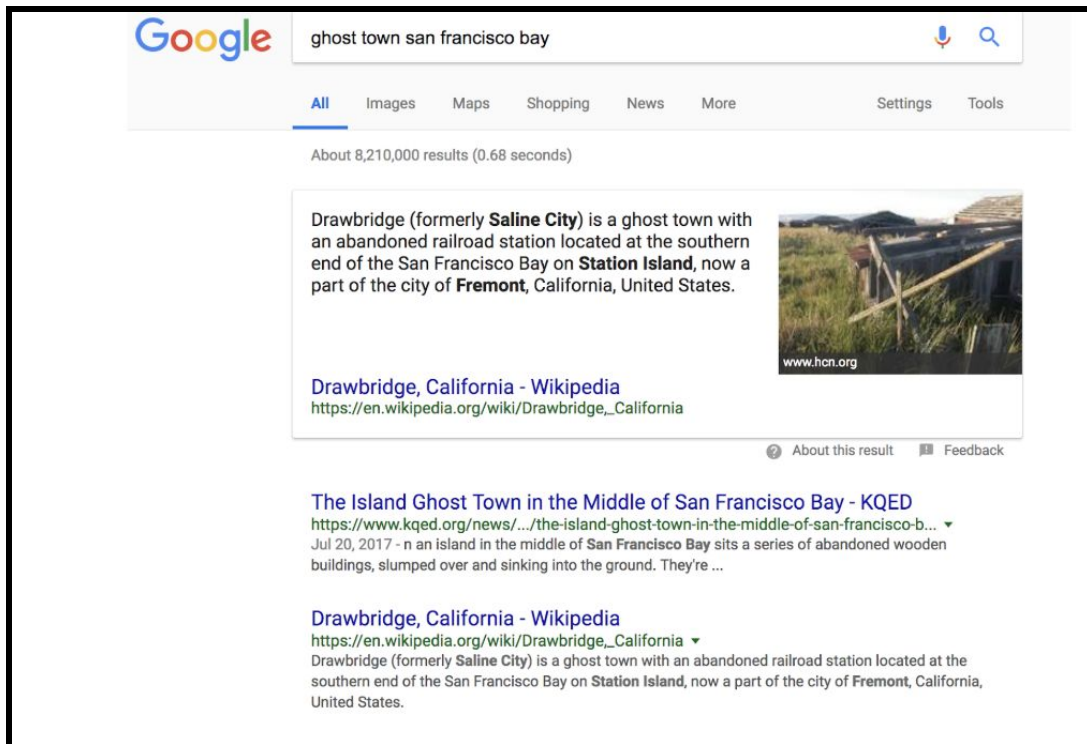
Query keywords: sometimes, an alternate

- Contrast ***that*** search query with :

Example: "I heard there was some old city in San Francisco Bay. What was it called?"

[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.

Comparing effects of different queries



what was the old city in san francisco bay called	old city san francisco bay	ghost town san francisco bay
<p>All Images News Videos Maps More</p> <p>About 48,300,000 results (0.75 seconds)</p> <p>It enters the bay at the town of Alviso. It then connects to the Golden Gate strait. However, this entire group of interconnected bays is often called the San Francisco Bay.</p> <p>San Francisco Bay - Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco_Bay</p> <p>People also ask</p> <p>What was the original name of San Francisco?</p> <p>Which county does San Francisco belong to?</p> <p>What is San Francisco named after?</p> <p>What's considered the Bay Area?</p> <p>San Francisco Bay - Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco_Bay ▼ It enters the bay at the town of Alviso. It then connects to the Pacific Ocean. However, this entire group of interconnected bays is often called the San Francisco Bay.</p> <p>San Francisco - Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco ▼ San Francisco officially the City and County of San Francisco, is the third most populous city in California. The city is located on the northern end of the San Francisco Peninsula, which extends into the San Francisco Bay. The city is known for its Golden Gate Bridge, its cable cars, and its role in the California Gold Rush. The city is also known for its fog, its earthquakes, and its role in the development of the United States.</p> <p>History of San Francisco · San Francisco Bay Area · City Attorney</p>	<p>All Maps Images Videos News More</p> <p>About 229,000,000 results (0.74 seconds)</p> <p>List of cities and towns in the San Francisco Bay Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• San Francisco Bay Area.• Skyline of San Jose.• Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco.• Lake Merritt in Oakland.• Central Park in Fremont.• Old Courthouse Square in Santa Rosa.• City Hall in Hayward.• Murphy Street in Sunnyvale. <p>More items...</p> <p>List of cities and towns in the San Francisco Bay Area https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cities_and_towns_in_the_San_Francisco_Bay_Area</p> <p>People also ask</p> <p>What city is across the bay from San Francisco?</p> <p>What's close to San Francisco?</p> <p>What is the abandoned city in San Francisco Bay?</p> <p>What city is across the bridge from San Francisco?</p> <p>List of cities and towns in the San Francisco Bay Area https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cities_and_towns_in_the_San_Francisco_Bay_Area</p>	<p>All Images Maps Shopping News More</p> <p>About 8,210,000 results (0.68 seconds)</p> <p>Drawbridge (formerly Saline City) is a ghost town with an abandoned railroad station located at the southern end of the San Francisco Bay on Station Island, now a part of the city of Fremont, California, United States.</p> <p>Drawbridge, California - Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drawbridge,_California</p> <p>The Island Ghost Town in the Middle of San Francisco Bay https://www.kqed.org/news/117207/the-island-ghost-town-in-the-middle-of-san-francisco-bay Jul 20, 2017 - In an island in the middle of San Francisco Bay sits a series of buildings, slumped over and sinking into the ground. They're ...</p> <p>Drawbridge, California - Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drawbridge,_California ▼ Drawbridge (formerly Saline City) is a ghost town with an abandoned railroad station located at the southern end of the San Francisco Bay on Station Island, now a part of the city of Fremont, California, United States.</p> <p>Videos</p> <p> BAY CURIOUS 5:16</p> <p> 5:15</p>

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.

Question answering



how long is the mississippi river



[All](#) [Images](#) [Maps](#) [Shopping](#) [News](#) [More](#) [Settings](#) [Tools](#)

About 142,000,000 results (0.73 seconds)

Mississippi River / Length

2,348 mi



People also search for



Missouri River
2.341K mi



Nile
4.258K mi



Amazon River
4.345K mi

[Feedback](#)

People also ask

How many states do the Mississippi River go through?

How big is the Mississippi River?

How old is the Mississippi River?



Mississippi River

River in the United States of America

4.3 ★★★★★ 758 Google reviews

The Mississippi River is the second longest river of the United States and the chief river of the second-largest drainage system on the North American continent, second only to the Hudson Bay drainage system. [Wikipedia](#)

Discharge: 593,000 ft³/s

Mouth: [Gulf of Mexico](#)

Source: [Lake Itasca](#)

Basin size: 1,151,000 sq mi (2,980,000 km²)

Country: [United States of America](#)

Did you know: The Mississippi River flows through Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana. [softschools.com](#)

The screenshot shows a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text "how long is the mississippi river in km". Below the search bar, the results are displayed. On the left, a large box shows the answer "3,778 km" with a small image of a river. To the right of this box is a map of the United States with the Mississippi River highlighted. Below the map, there is a section titled "Mississippi River" with a 4.3-star rating and 721 Google reviews. This section includes a brief description, a list of facts (Length: 2,348 mi, Source: Lake Itasca, Mouth: Gulf of Mexico, Basin size: 1,151,000 sq mi, Bridges: Stone Arch Bridge, Cha..., Did you know: Saint Anthony Falls, Mississippi River, wikipedia.org), and a link to the Wikipedia page. At the bottom of the search results, there is a video player showing a man speaking. The video player has a progress bar at 5:04 / 5:27.

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)