

A Scholar's Guide to Google

Table of Contents ▼

Google Web

Advanced Searching

Tips on conducting advanced web searches using Google, including using operators not readily available from the Advanced Search Page.

Google users can conduct advanced searches in two ways:

1. By using the search engine's dedicated **Advanced Search** page
2. By integrating **Advanced Search Operators** into their search.

Advanced Search Page

Google's **Advanced Search** screen (shown below) allows researchers an easy way to refine a query by filling in special fields or using a series of pull-down menus. Users can find results containing *all* of their search terms, an *exact phase*, at least *one* of their search words, or *without* specified words, simply by filling in the appropriate text boxes.

In addition, users can use the **Advanced Search** page to limit their search by **Language**, **File Format** (Ex. .pdf, .ps, .doc, .xls, .ppt, .rtf), **Date** (Ex. only return web pages updated in the last 3 months, 6 months or year), **Occurrences** (Ex. only return results where the search terms occur in the title, text, URL, etc.), **Domain** (Ex. only return results from a particular site or domain that you select), **Similar** (Ex. find pages similar to the page you specify), or **Links** (Ex. find pages that link to the page you specify).

Google also allows users to automatically filter explicit sexual content from their results list by using **SafeSearch Filtering**.

Alternate Query Types

Some special queries NOT readily available through the **Advanced Search Page** are listed below. I have added relevant examples to the descriptions taken from this **Google help page**.

cache:

The query [cache:] will show the version of the web page that Google has in its cache.

E.g.

For instance, the search above will show Google's cache of Harvard's main homepage. Note there can be no space between the "cache:" and the web page url. If you include other words in the query, **Google** will highlight those words within the cached document. For instance, [cache:www.harvard.edu college] will show the cached content with the word "college"

highlighted. This functionality is also accessible by clicking on the "Cached" link on Google's

main results page. | **Last Updated:** Jun 8, 2017 1:21 PM | **URL:** <https://guides.library.harvard.edu/googleguide> | **Print Page**

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scholar, searching, search strategies, searching web

The query [info:] will present some information that **Google** has about that web page. For instance, [info:www.harvard.edu] will show information about the Harvard homepage. Note there can be no space between the "info:" and the web page url. This functionality is also accessible by typing the web page url directly into a Google search box.

E.g.

define:

The query [define:] will provide a definition of the words you enter after it, gathered from various online sources. The definition will be for the entire phrase entered (i.e., it will include all the words in the exact order you typed them).

E.g.

intitle:

If you include [intitle:] in your query, Google will restrict the results to documents containing that word in the title. For instance, [intitle:harvard biology] will return documents that mention the word "harvard" in their title, and mention the word "biology" anywhere in the document (title or no). Note there can be no space between the "intitle:" and the following word.

E.g.

Putting [intitle:] in front of every word in your query is equivalent to putting [allintitle:] at the front of your query:

E.g.

is the same as

E.g.

inurl:

If you include [inurl:] in your query, **Google** will restrict the results to documents containing that word in the url. For instance, [inurl:harvard biology] will return documents that mention the word

"harvard" in the url, and mention the word "biology" anywhere in the document (url or no). Note there can be no space between the "inurl:" and the following word.

E.g.

Putting [inurl:] in front of every word in your query is equivalent to putting [allinurl:] at the front of your query:

E.g.

is the same as

E.g.

How Google Works

A brief description of Google's "special sauce" (i.e., how they rank web pages).

Google, like many other search engines today, has moved beyond simply counting the number of times a term appears on a Web page (or in its metadata) in order to determine its relative "rank" in the results set. Instead, it examines all aspects of a page's content (as well as the content of the web sites that link to it) using sophisticated text-matching techniques. Google's *PageRank* system also determines a site's relative standing by taking into account the following:

- 1) the number of links to the Web page from other (external) sites
- 2) the relative "importance" of the sites making the link.

Harvard researchers should understand that some scholarly and highly relevant Web pages may appear further down the Google results list, not because they are less scholarly or relevant, but simply because others have outranked them in terms of keywords and referral links. Scholars should also be aware that Google runs search relevant ads above and next to their official results.

10 Quick Search Tips

From "Avoiding Stop Words" to "Boolean Basics," these tips will help you to hone in quickly on your research topic!

1. Avoid Stop Words

The more stop words in your query (such as adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, or forms of "be"), the less likely your results will include what you're looking for.

| | | |
|--------|---|--|
| No >> | <input type="text" value="when Toni Morrison was in London"/> | <input type="button" value="Google Search"/> |
| Yes >> | <input type="text" value="Toni Morrison London"/> | <input type="button" value="Google Search"/> |

2. Boolean Basics

The Boolean AND command is automatically implied in ALL **Google** searches. Boolean OR must be in all capital letters, or else google will simply ignore it. Boolean NOT is the minus sign "-" and must be in front of each word you want to exclude.

| | | |
|------|--|--|
| E.g. | <input type="text" value="venezia OR venice"/> | <input type="button" value="Google Search"/> |
|------|--|--|

3. No Case Sensitivity

Google searches are not case sensitive. All letters, regardless of how you enter them, are understood as lower case. For example, searches for "george washington," "George Washington," and "George washington" all return the same results.

| | | |
|------|--|--|
| E.g. | <input type="text" value="george washington"/> | <input type="button" value="Google Search"/> |
|------|--|--|

4. Use Quotes

You can force **Google** to look for words in the exact order you type them in by putting quotes around the words in your search.

| | | |
|------|--|--|
| E.g. | <input type="text" value="'midnight's children'"/> | <input type="button" value="Google Search"/> |
|------|--|--|

5. Restrict Domain

In order to help you find quality hits, you might want to restrict your search only to Web sites at government or educational institutions. You can do this by typing in your search and then the word site: [remember the colon] and then the domain.

| | | |
|------|---|--|
| E.g. | <input type="text" value="cicero site:.edu"/> | <input type="button" value="Google Search"/> |
|------|---|--|

6. Don't Assume Singular/Plural Included

Google improves its results by **ONLY** looking at the form of the word that you type in. If you type in the word "cake," it won't necessarily find the word "cakes." Be precise when searching and use the appropriate Boolean command when necessary.

E.g.

7. No Truncation, But...

No user-defined truncation is allowed in **Google**. Instead, the search engine automatically uses its "stemming" technology. When appropriate, it will search not only for your search terms, but also for words that are similar to some or all of those terms. For specific truncation needs, use a series of searches and the Boolean operators.

E.g.

8. How to Search Using Common Words

Google generally ignores common words and characters such as "this," "where," "how", as well as certain single digits and single letters. It will indicate if a common word has been excluded by displaying details on the results page below the search box. If a common word is essential to your search, you can include it by putting a "+" sign in front of it (be sure to include a space before the "+" sign) or put quotation marks around two or more words. **Ex. "where are you"**

E.g.

search for both by placing the tilde sign ("~") immediately in front of the keyword. For example, to search for food facts as well as nutrition and cooking information, use:

E.g.