

beyond

Google advanced search: A comprehensive list of Google search operators

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All you need to know about advanced search query operators but didn't know you needed to know

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“Search Term”

This operator searches for the exact phrase within speech marks only. This is ideal when the phrase you are using to search is ambiguous and could be easily confused with something else, or when you're not quite getting relevant enough results back. For example:

“Tinned Sandwiches”

This will search for only the finer tinned variety of the **bread based snack**, at the exclusion of all others.

OR

This self explanatory operator searches for a given search term OR an equivalent term. For instance, if you have an unhealthy fascination with the famous ‘Sheens’ you could search for:

“Martin Sheen” OR “Charlie Sheen”

Then immediately seek psychiatric help.

– (and +)

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about Manchester, but didn't want your results to be polluted by information about the city's **red clothed football team**, you could search for the following:

Manchester -united

This would return results for "Manchester", while removing any that feature the word "united". Using + forces Google to return common words that might ordinarily be discarded, for example:

Peanut Butter +and Jam

~

Adding a tilde to a search word tells Google that you want it to bring back **synonyms** for the term as well. For example, entering "~set" will bring back results that include words like "configure", "collection" and "change" which are all synonyms of "set". Fun fact: "set" has the most definitions of any word in the dictionary.

site:

This searches only within a given domain – delectable when you want to only search within the confines of a particular site. For

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site:twitter.com Paul Daniels

site:twitter.com Geoffrey Archer

site:twitter.com Alan Hansen

site:twitter.com Nicholas Lyndhurst

link:

Use this operator to find links to a domain. Bonus note: Google only provides a sample of backlinks, meaning that this operator isn't very useful for uncovering the complete selection of links to a site, but it is good for quickly identifying a sample of sites that link to a specific domain. For example:

link:bynd.com

For a more complete selection of backlinks, use the Yahoo! operator **-linkdomain:** – which we will cover later.

Less Common Google Search Operators

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allintitle: (and also intitle:)

Searches only for sites with the given word(s) in the **page** title.

Intitle: does the same thing but for single words and can be used with more flexibility. For instance, if I searched:

intitle:hammer nails

The results would show **pages** with just “hammer” in the **page** title, and with “nails” elsewhere. Note: in **blog search** this same function is performed by **inblogtitle:** and **inposttitle:**

allintext: (and also intext:)

This operator searches only for sites where the given word(s) are in the text of the **page**.

allinanchor: (and also inanchor:)

This shows sites which have the keyterms in links pointing to them, in order of the most links. For instance, if I searched for **allinanchor:helicopters**, Google would show me the top sites which are linked to, where the anchor text for the link is “helicopters”.

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allinurl (and also inurl:)

Similar to the last few, but fetches results where the key words are in the URL. This is useful if you've forgotten the exact URL of a website, but can still remember bits of it. Note: in blog search this same function is **blogurl:**, making it handy for searching for topics on specific platforms. For example:

blogger blogurl:wordpress

Would find WordPress blogs that are – paradoxically – talking about Blogger.

inurl:view/view.shtml

Will reveal a list of webcams – useful for voyeurs.

allinpostauthor: (and also inpostauthor:)

Exclusive to blog search, this one picks out blog posts that are written by specific individuals. For instance, if you wanted sound advice on how to use Online PR and Social Media to improve your company's ROI, you could try:

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*

Putting an asterisk in a search tells Google ‘I don’t know what goes here’. Basically, it’s really good for finding half remembered song lyrics or names of things. If you put the asterisk in a search like:

I’ve got a brand new pair of *

Google will fill in the blank and tell you that you’ve got a brand new pair of Belgians, hopefully. Though it’ll more than likely be rollerskates.

+ (immediately before query)

Google is now craftily providing a wide range of synonym results in response to relevant search queries. For example, if I search for “California”, Google knows that this is the same as “CA” and will also return results for the latter but – and it’s a huge but – if I suffer from abbrphobia (fear of abbreviations), then just looking at the word “CA” will hurl me into a massive world of terror. I want to avoid these words like my life depends on it. So, I use:

+California

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related:

Simple: it returns searches for sites that are related to a given domain. This one is interesting for testing Google's semantic perception of a given domain, for example:

related:www.guardian.co.uk

..

Use two full stops to search in a range of numbers, for example:

I own 1..100 cats

Will bring back results that encompass searches on "I own 1 cat" to "I own 100 cats". Totally useless.

info:website

Using this operator will tell Google to bring back information about a certain domain. It reveals:

- Google's cache of the site
- Pages that are similar to the one you searched for

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loc:placename

This operator brings back results from **pages** in a given place. Even better, it can be used to search for specific types of places within that location, for example:

loc:Brighton pub

Will mostly return **pages** for pubs that are in Brighton. It's clever.

define:phrase

Google can do anything. If you search:

define:ululate

It will bring back six definitions from different websites, from Wiktionary to encyclopedia.com.

daterange:

This query will search within a given date and time range, but is a bit unusable because dates must be entered in the tricky Julian

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Will search for **beagle**-based articles over the last two days. Bonus link: calculate Julian dates **here**.

source:

This is one that only works in **Google News** search. If we look for:

Gordon Brown source:the_guardian

Google will show all the mentions of Gordon Brown in articles where **The Guardian** is identified as the news source.

location:

This is another news operator that allows you to search for articles by location:

location:London

filetype:

This lets you search for a certain filetype. For instance:

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Will bring back only MP3 results. Useless note: you can also use the extension “ext:” to do exactly the same thing.

movie:

If you search:

movie:Iron Man 2

And then enter a location, Google will tell you where you can see the film and at what time. This operator can also be used in conjunction with the aforementioned “loc:”

phonebook:

This seems to only work in the US, but if you search:

phonebook:john smith

You’ll be given a worrying list of phone numbers for people called John Smith.

weather:

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weather:brighton

Will bring back results both for Brighton pages on weather websites, as well as a little weather widget at the top of the results page.

stocks:

I use this query to track the stock price of my investment portfolio – AND NOW YOU CAN TOO. Just use the operator followed by the company ticker symbol that you wish to receive information on, for example:

stocks:BAC

Will show stock information for **Bank of America**.

cache:

Shows Google's most recent cache of a webpage.

map:

Adding the word map after a locational search forces Google to

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in

Google can be used as a **calculator**. As part of this functionality, “In” is a superb function that can be used (among many other Google calculation operators) to work out the number of units of something in something else. For example:

mph in speed of light

Non-Google Search Operators

In **Yahoo!**:

linkdomain:

This operator, followed by the URL of the site, will return a fairly comprehensive list of links to a **page** or domain (more comprehensive list than Google provides, anyway). For example:

linkdomain:**bynd.com**

In **Bing**:

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comprehensive list of links from a **page** or domain, although this information is restricted to domain level, rather than **page** level. This is handy when you want to see the type of content that is linked to by influential domains. e.g.
linkfromdomain:guardian.co.uk.

inbody:

Similar to Google's **intext**, this searches for mentions of a given term in the body of the **page**

feed:

Simple: finds feeds on a website, based on searched-for terms. This is a good way to find blogs.

contains:

Finds **pages** that link to particular filetypes. For instance, if I wanted to find **pages** containing MP3s of my favourite band – **Mike and the Mechanics** – I would search for “Mike and the Mechanics” contains:MP3. You can also use this query with the **site:** command, to search within a given domain.

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language:

Finds results in a given language, for example:

ocelot language:fr

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