

Go Google!

GENERAL SEARCH TIPS

Two of the keys to finding information on the web are choosing search terms wisely and understanding how to enter them in the most efficient way to yield the results you are looking for. A *search term* is the word or phrase that best describes what you are looking for. Often times, your search will yield useful information more quickly if you use multiple search terms appropriately.

For example, perhaps you are interested in learning the origin of capers. A Google search for **capers** yields 917,000 results, the first of which is an organic foods market. Not quite what we were looking for.

A Google search for **capers origin** yields 133,000 results and the first result appears to include exactly what we were looking for. Let's take a little deeper look.

Adding Search Terms

When we searched for **capers**, Google returns every webpage that it has indexed that includes the word *capers*. There are over 984,000 pages on the Internet that include the word *capers*. We narrowed our search by adding the word *origin* to our search. When we searched for **capers origin** Google returns every webpage that it has indexed that includes the words *capers* and *origins*. In this case, our search worked out well, but we actually were quite lucky. Google could have very easily returned a page that included the word *capers* but included information about the origin of something else (for example, the sixth hit is an eco-tour site in South Carolina). After all, Google doesn't know you're searching for the origin of capers, it just looks for webpages that somewhere include the words *capers* and *origin*.

Notice there is no need to use the term "and" or the + symbol in your search in this case because Google automatically only returns webpages that include all of your search terms. The plus sign + is useful if Google informs you that it automatically excluded a common word from your search (such as a, how) and you want to force it as part of your search.

Order of Search Terms

By reversing the order of our search terms (searching for **origin capers**), our results actually change. Google returns webpages that include the search terms you have entered *in the order* that you enter them. The webpages returned in this search have the word *origin* on the page first, then the word *caper*. Sometimes it is not clear which order of search terms is best, but at least be aware that changing the order of search terms changes your results.

Defining Terms

Google has a built in dictionary! After you submit a search, the search terms you entered appear as hyperlinks near the upper right corner of your search results. Clicking on any of your linked search terms takes you to a dictionary definition page of the term!

Searching for Phrases

Often times, a search for keywords doesn't yield the specific information you are looking for. Sometimes an entire phrase works better, such as **origin of capers**. However, instead of simply searching for the words of the phrase (which will return all pages that somewhere include the word *origin*, *of*, and *capers*), it is best to search for **"origin of capers"** (with the quotes included!), which will only return pages that include the entire phrase in quotes.

Phrasing also works well when searching for an individual's name on the Internet. Searching for **kathleen plinske** yields good results, but it will return pages that have the name *kathleen* somewhere in the page and the word *plinske* could be at another location on the page entirely. Searching for **"kathleen plinske"** yields only pages that have the full name.

Excluding Terms

Perhaps you wanted to search for information about bears and their cubs. With such a sports crazed town, a search for **bears cubs** will not automatically provide what you are looking for! A way to quickly remedy this is to eliminate any pages that include the word *Chicago*. Instead, search for **bears cubs -Chicago**. Notice how this narrows down the results! This technique is very useful when Google returns many pages that are not related to your search. For example, imagine you wanted to find information on the *Elmo* projector in the classroom. A search for **elmo** not surprisingly yields many unrelated results. What search terms could you exclude to narrow your search appropriately?

GOOGLE AS A MATH WHIZ

Don't have a calculator nearby? No problem! Use Google for your math needs. Try entering **2+2**. Brilliant! Even more brilliant is Google's ability to do more complex math. Do you want to know how many seconds are in a year? Search for **60*60*24*365**. Or, search **how many seconds in a year**. Are you kidding me?? Try **how many square feet in an acre**. Or, **how many tablespoons in an ounce**. Brilliant.

LOOKING FOR A GREAT BOOK?

Have you been dying to read a book about polar bears? Search **books about polar bears**. Amazing! Would you like to buy one of these books? Simply click on a book that interests you and you're ready to shop online.

WHAT'S THAT MEAN?

I was once called a whippersnapper at an important meeting. I wanted to know if I was being insulted or complemented, so I searched Google for **define whippersnapper**. I was not pleased with the results!

POPCORN, ANYONE?

Looking for movie times? Just search Google for the name of the movie. It will automatically ask for your zip code and let you know showtimes for area theaters that are playing your movie.

No WINDOWS? Is IT RAINING?

Search Google for **weather 60012**. An automatic weather forecast appears!

WHO JUST CALLED?

Google provides limited caller identification services (for listed numbers only). Try entering a phone number in Google **(815) 455-3700** and the complete directory listing will appear. Need a phone number? Enter the **company name, zip code** (such as **McHenry County College, 60012**) for the directory listing. Do you want to know where an area code is located? Just search for the area code, and the city listing will appear.

FLIGHT TRACKING

Enter the name of the airlines followed by the flight number (**American Airlines 650**). Links to track the status of the flight will automatically appear.

FINDING IMAGES

Google has a powerful search engine for finding images on the web. Simply visit <http://images.google.com> You can use many of the same search techniques to quickly find images that you use when looking for webpages (for a quick illustration, try the Elmo example). If you are looking for a high quality image to use at a relatively large size (more than 3”), use the **Size** limiters near the upper right corner of your search results. By clicking the **Large** link, only large images will be returned which can be used at a large size at a high quality. Medium-sized images often also work well, but small images usually only work well as thumbnails on the web.

GOOGLE MAPS

Visit <http://maps.google.com> and enter your address (be sure to enter either your city/state or zip code or both – **8900 US Highway 14, 60012** or **8900 US Highway 14, Crystal Lake, IL** – Google will provide suggestions if it doesn’t understand exactly what you mean by your search). Google provides a map and can provide driving directions to/from the location you entered. Not impressed yet? Click the **Satellite** link near the upper right corner of your search results page. On the map that appears, use the zoom tools to zoom in and out, and click and drag your mouse over the map to move all over the world. Now, you must be impressed!

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