

Finding answers online using



With over a trillion URLs in its index, Google is a veritable treasure trove of information. Yet, finding just the right document out of this mass of URLs—the one that answers your question—can be daunting.

There's good news for you - the search results you seek are about to rise to the top of the results, thanks to some of Google's search-refinement operators that we'll discuss in this presentation.

Later in this presentation, we'll discuss the world of Google's advanced search operators, such as *filetype;*, *intitle;*, *inurl: site;* and *daterange:*.

Finally, we will put Google alerts into place to be notified when content changes and learn how to search for images.

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1. Refining your searches

If your search yields millions of search results, your search query is probably too broad.

Rather than wading through pages and pages of search results, use these search refinement tips:

- **Multiple words:** Avoid making one-word queries.
- **Case insensitivity:** There's no need to capitalize.
- **Superfluous words:** Drop overly common words.
- **Exact phrases:** Put quotes around phrases.
- **Word order:** Arrange your words in the order you think they would appear in the documents you're looking for.
- **Singular versus plural:** Use plural if you think the word will appear in that form in the documents you're looking for.
- **Wild card:** * can substitute for a whole word in a multiword search.
- **Number range:** .. between numbers will match on numbers within that range.
- **Punctuation:** A hyphenated search word will also yield pages with the un-hyphenated version. Not so with apostrophes.
- **Accents:** Don't incorporate accents into search words if you don't think they'll appear in the documents you're looking for.
- **Boolean logic:** Use *OR* and *-* to fine-tune your search.
- **Stemming:** Google may also match variations of your search word unless you tell it otherwise by preceding the word with *+*.
- **Synonyms:** *~* in front of a word will also match other words that Google considers to be synonymous or related.

Multiple Words

The first key to refined searches is a multiple-word query. A one-word search query isn't going to give you as targeted a search result. Searching for *ohio car buyer statistics* instead of *statistics* will yield a smaller and more specific set of search results.

Start with the shortest relevant search query and refine it by adding more words and operators after that if the results are too broad.

Case Insensitivity

Searches are case insensitive for the most part, so capitalizing the word *Ohio* in the above example is unnecessary, as it would return the same results. Note that search operators such as *site:* must not be capitalized (discussed later) but *OR* should be capitalized if you mean to use it as a Boolean operator rather than a keyword.

Superfluous Words

Overly common words like *the, an, of, in, where, who, and is* are known as *stop words*.

Google usually omits these words from your query unless it detects some kind of special case scenario, such as if they are part of a common phrase, a name of a place, the title of a book, etc.

Avoid formulating your query as a question. A search like *how many female consumers in ohio buy cars?* is not an effective query.

Questions invariably contain superfluous words that probably won't appear in the text of the documents you are searching for (such as the word *many*). Thus, a large number of useful documents will have been eliminated.

Exact Phrases

If you're looking for a phrase rather than a collection of words interspersed in the document, put quotes around your search query. Enclosing a query in quotes ensures that Google will match those words only if they occur within an exact phrase. Otherwise, Google will return pages where the words appear in any order, anywhere on the page. For example, a *market research* query returns many more (but less useful) results than "*market research*" would.

You can include multiple phrases in the same query, such as "*market research consultants new zealand*"; such a query would match on documents that contain the word *consultants* in front of or behind the phrase *market research*, but giving preference to pages where *consultants* appear after *market research*.

Be careful not to create queries that should not be phrases. In the example of "*market research consultants new zealand*" you might be tempted to simply put one set of quotes around the whole set of words (like so: "*market research consultants new zealand*").

Such a search would return a nearly empty result set, however, because it's not a likely order of words used in natural language.

Word Order

It's important to consider the order of the words you use in your search query because it can affect not only the number of results but the relative rankings of those results as well. Priority would be given to pages where those words/phrases appear in the order given in your search query.

Singular Versus Plural

Consider whether the pages you seek are more likely to contain the singular form or the plural form of a given keyword, and then use that form in your search query. For example, a search for *car buyers females statistics* does not return nearly as good a set of results as *car buyers female statistics*.

Wildcard

The asterisk acts as a wildcard character and allows you to omit one or more words in a search phrase.

This is useful in multiple ways. You can substitute a word or name that you can't remember, or which has multiple spellings. You can also use the asterisk in market research where you want to concentrate on specific keywords that are frequently used as part of phrases, such as *ohio * cars*, in which the asterisk would represent many useful words like used, new, wrecked, classic, or specific properties (red, convertible, etc.) or brands (Honda, Ford, etc.).

If you wish to learn more about marketing your own books, you'd be better off with a search for *marketing * books* than *marketing books*, as the latter would return more results discussing books about marketing.

Asterisks can be used as a substitute only for an entire word—not for a part of a word.

The asterisk is even more helpful when used within an exact phrase search. For example, *"standards * marketing"* would match pages that match the phrases *standards for marketing*, *standards in marketing*, as well as *standards and marketing*, to name a few.

When you put numbers between the *, Google will display the product of those two numbers. This is an exception to the wildcard use case.

Number Range

Your Google search can span a numerical range; you indicate the range by using two dots between two numbers, which could be years, dollar amounts, or any other numerical value.

For example, a search for *confidential business plan 2008..2011* will find documents that mention 2008 or 2009 or 2010, or 2011. The query *confidential business plan \$2000000..\$5000000* will match documents that mention dollar figures anywhere in the range of \$2 million to \$5 million, even if commas are present in the numbers.

As a shortcut, you can leave off the high end and Google will assume infinity. For example, *100..* will match any number greater than or equal to 100. Use *0..100* to match numbers less than or equal to 100.

Note that currency symbols such as \$ change the nature of a number. A search for *Nikon 400* will yield different results than *Nikon \$400*.

Punctuation

Other than these special characters (wildcard and range indicators), most punctuation gets ignored.

An important exception is the hyphen. A search query of *on-site consulting* will be interpreted as *onsite consulting OR on-site consulting OR on site consulting*.

The hyphen indicates a strong relationship between two words: the underscore symbol also connects two words under most conditions.

Another important exception is the apostrophe, which is matched exactly if contained within the word. So, *marketer's toolkit* will return different results from *marketers' toolkit*, but the latter will be equivalent to *marketers toolkit* (i.e., without the apostrophe).

Accents

Accents are yet another exception. A search for *internet cafés manhattan* will yield a markedly different set of results than *internet cafes manhattan*.

For search terms and phrases that include accents, always perform your search with and without the accent to ensure a complete set of results.

Boolean Logic

You may find that you want to match both the singular and plural forms of a word.

In that case, you can use the *OR* search operator, as in "*direct marketing consultant OR consultants*". Note that the *OR* should be capitalized to distinguish it from *or* as a keyword.

You may be wondering if, since there is an *OR* operator, there is an *AND* operator as well. Indeed there is. However, it is not necessary to specify it, because it is automatically implied. So don't bother with it.

Google also offers an exclusion operator, but it's not called *NOT*. It's the minus sign (-).

It works as you might expect, eliminating from the search results the subsequent word or quote-encapsulated exact phrase. For example, *confidential "business plan" OR "marketing plan" -template* will not return pages in the results if they mention the word *template*, thus effectively eliminating the sample templates from the results and displaying a much higher percentage of actual business plans and marketing plans. (As an example of a query with a phrase negated instead of a single word, consider "*marketing plan*" -"*business plan*".)

The *AND* and *OR* operators can be abbreviated as a plus sign (+) and the pipe symbol (|), respectively. Thus, the previous search query can be fed to Google as *confidential ("business plan" | "marketing plan") -template*.

Google has exceptions for all of these operators. For instance, if the word "or" is part of a phrase, Google will probably detect it as such and not treat the "or" as an operator.

Likewise, the + symbol when it is used as part of a common word or term (such as the C++ programming language or the Notepad++ text editor). The + symbol will also be used as an addition operator when it appears between two numbers; Google will display their sum. When the - is used between two words as a hyphen, Google will not treat it as a "not" operator; it will treat the two words as one hyphenated term.

Stemming

Sometimes, Google automatically matches on variations of a word. This is called *stemming*.

Google does this by matching words that are based on the same stem as the keyword entered as a search term.

So, for the query *electronics distributing market research*, Google will match pages that don't mention the word *distributing* but instead a variation on the stem *distribut*: e.g., the keywords *distributor*, *distributors*, and *distribution*.

You can disable the automatic stemming of a word by preceding the word with a plus sign. For instance, *electronics +distributing market research* will not match on *distribution, distributors, distributor*, and so on.

Synonyms

You can expand your search beyond stemming to incorporate various synonyms too, using the tilde (~) operator.

For instance, *market research data ~grocery* will also include pages in the results that mention *foods, shopping* or *supermarkets*, rather than *grocery*.

2. Google Search Operators

Google is capable of much more than a simple search.

We already explained several ways to refine your Google searches through simple operators and other tricks that involve the search query.

Now we will explain how to use advanced search operators, which enable you to refine a search by limiting the index by web location, content type, and various search metadata (title, link text, post date, etc.).

All operators are case-sensitive, so be sure to use all lowercase letters (the iPhone's/Android's web browser will try to capitalize the first letter of every sentence, so make sure you go back and correct it before executing your query).

Here's a quick list of the most useful Google search operators, followed by a short explanation of each:

Operator	Description	Format Example	Description
filetype:		marketing plan filetype:doc	Restrict search results by file type extension
site:		google site:sec.gov	Search within a site or domain
inurl:		inurl:marketing	Search for a word or phrase within the URL
allinurl:		allinurl: marketing plan	Search for multiple words within the URL
intext:		intext:marketing	Search for a word in the main body text
allintext:		allintext: marketing plan	Search for multiple words within the body text of indexed pages
intitle:		intitle:"marketing plan"	Search for a word or phrase within the page title
allintitle:		allintitle: marketing plan	Search for multiple words within the page title
inanchor:		inanchor:"marketing plan"	Search for a word or phrase within an anchor text
allinanchor:		allinanchor: marketing plan	Search for multiple words within an anchor text
daterange:		marketing plan daterange: 2454832-2455196	Restrict search results to pages indexed during the specified range (requires Julian dates)
related:		related:http://www.abc.com/abc.html	Display pages of similar content
info:		info:http://www.abc.com/abc.html	Display info about a page

link:	link:http://www.abc.com/ abc.html	Display pages that link to the specified page
cache:	cache:http://www.abc.com/ abc.html	Display Google's cached version of a page
define:	define:viral marketing	Define a word or phrase
stocks:	stocks:msft	Display stock quotes and financial info for a specified ticker symbol
{area code}	212	Display the location and map of an area code
{street address}	123 main, chicago, il chicago, il chicago, etc.	Display a street map for a specified location
{mathematical expression}	35 * 40 * 52	Do a calculation or measurement conversion
{package tracking ID}, {flight number}, etc.	valid tracking ID	Track packages, flights, etc. using valid tracking IDs
{time in location}	time in london, england	Shows the local time in the specified location
{weather in location}	weather in titusville, florida	Shows a multiday basic weather forecast for the specified location
{movies in location}	movies Philadelphia, pa	Returns movie showtimes that are playing at all theaters in this location
{flights to/from location}	flights Tucson	Returns flight times to, from, or between the locations specified
{sunset/sunrise in location}	sunset in Key West, FL	Returns the expected time of sunset or sunrise in the given location, in that place's local time
{sports team}	San Francisco 49ers	Shows the score from the game this sports team is playing in, or the schedule for future games if this team isn't playing today
earthquake	earthquake	Shows the latest earthquake information around the world

filetype:

You can restrict your search to Word documents, to Excel documents, to PDF files, or to PowerPoint files by adding *filetype:doc*, *filetype:xls*, *filetype:pdf*, or *filetype:ppt*, respectively, to your search query.

Google allows any extension to be entered in conjunction with the *filetype:* operator, including *htm*, *txt*, *php*, *asp*, *jsp*, *swf*, etc. Google then matches your desired extension after the filename in the URL. Note that there is no space after the colon when using this operator. You can use *ext:* instead of *filetype:*—they do the same thing.

site:

You can search within a site or a domain by adding the *site:* operator followed by a site's domain name to your query.

For example, you could search for *email marketing* but restrict your search to only pages within the MarketingProfs site with a query of: *email marketing site:www.marketingprofs.com*.

You can also add a subdirectory to the end of the domain in a *site:* query. For example *email marketing site:http://www.marketingprofs.com/tls*

To conduct a comprehensive search of all of the associated subdomains of a domain, omit the *www* and instead specify only the main domain. For example, a search for *site:yahoo.com* would encompass not just *www.yahoo.com*, but also *movies.yahoo.com*, *travel.yahoo.com*, *personals.yahoo.com*, etc., The *site:* search operator works even when just the domain extension (like *.com*, *.org*, *.gov*, or *.co.uk*) is specified.

Thus, you can restrict your search to *.com* sites with *site:com*, to *.gov* sites with *site:gov*, or to *.co.uk* with *site:co.uk*.

Combining Boolean logic with the *site:* operator will allow you to search within multiple sites simultaneously. For instance, *email marketing (site:marketingprofs.com | site:marketingsherpa.com | site:marketingpower.com)* searches the three sites simultaneously.

The *site:* operator can be specified by itself without other search words to get a list of all pages indexed, such as *site:www.marketingprofs.com*. Again, note that there is no space after the colon when using this operator.

Use this approach to simultaneously search competitor sites for keywords of particular relevance (e.g., related products you want to monitor). Then either create a bookmarking site to easily monitor the index or create a Google Alert to receive an email any time the index changes.

The *site:* operator works outside of ordinary web search—it also works with Google Images, Google Product Search, and Google News.

inurl:

Use the *inurl:* operator to restrict the search results to pages that contain a particular word in the web address.

This can be especially useful if you want Google to display all the pages it has found within a particular directory on a particular site, such as *inurl:ftp site:http://www.kellogg.northwestern.edu* or all the pages with a particular script name, such as *inurl:Tool-Page site:http://www.vfinance.com*. Again, there is no space after the colon when using this operator.

allinurl:

This operator is similar in function to the *inurl:* operator, but is used for finding multiple words in the web address. It eliminates the need to keep repeating *inurl:* in front of every word you want to search for in the URL.

For instance, *allinurl: china exporting* is an equivalent and more concise form of the query *inurl:china inurl:exporting* to find web pages that contain the words *china* and *exporting* anywhere in the URL, including the filename, directory names, extension, or domain. There IS a space after the colon when using the *allinurl:* operator.

intext:

Searches for a word in the main body text. This is used similarly to *inurl:*.

For instance, if you wanted to find only pages that referenced Stephen Hawking and relativity, you might search for *stephen hawking intext:relativity*.

allintext:

Searches for multiple words within the body text of indexed pages. This is used in a similar fashion to *allinurl:*.

intitle:

Use the *intitle:* operator (such as *intitle:marketing*) to look for documents where your specified word or phrase matches in the page title. This is the hyperlinked text (usually blue) in the Google search result, which also appears in your browser's topmost bar.

If you want to find Microsoft Word documents in which the document title (located within Properties under the File menu in Word) includes the phrase *marketing plan*, you would use the query *intitle:"marketing plan" filetype:doc*. Follow the *intitle:* operator with a word or a phrase in quotes, without a space after the colon.

allintitle:

This works like *intitle:* but searches for multiple words in the title.

For instance, use *allintitle: channel conflict online retail* to search for documents that contain all four of those words in the title. Note that there is a space after the colon when using this operator.

inanchor:

The *inanchor:* operator will restrict your search to pages where the underlined text of inbound links matches your search word.

For example, if you wanted to search for merchandising but confine your search primarily to home pages, *merchandising inanchor:home* would do the trick since most sites link to their own home pages using the link text of "Home."

Follow the *inanchor:* operator with a word or a phrase in quotes, without a space after the colon.

allinanchor:

This works like *inanchor*: but searches for multiple words in the link text.

For example, the query *web metrics allinanchor: download trial* would invoke a search for pages relating to web metrics that have the words *download* and *trial* in the link text. Note that there is a space after the colon when using this operator.

daterange:

The *daterange*: operator restricts the search results to pages added or updated within the specified date range. Unfortunately, it only accepts Julian dates, which makes it less user-friendly than it could be.

You can find Gregorian-to-Julian date converters online, e.g. here:

<http://www.fourmilab.ch/documents/calendar>

You'll usually find it easier just to do your search first without a date range, then use the custom date range options in the "More search tools" area of the result page.

related:

related: queries show pages that are similar to the specified web page. Follow this operator with a web address, such as *related:http://www.marketingprofs.com*, and you would find web pages that are related to the MarketingProfs home page. This is identical to the Similar link in the bottom left of the Preview pane of each search result.

info:

An *info*: query lets you know whether the specified page is known by Google, and it provides the title and a snippet (if available), a link to the page, a link to a cached version of the page (see below for an explanation of this), and a link to view pages that link to the specified page.

Supply a web address after this operator, such as *info:http://www.marketingprofs.com*.

link:

The *link*: operator returns a sampling of pages (i.e., a small subset of the total) that link to the specified web page. Follow this operator with a web address, such as *link:http://www.marketingprofs.com* to find pages that link to the MarketingProfs home page.

cache:

The *cache*: operator provides a snapshot view of a web page as it looked when Googlebot last visited the page. Follow this operator with a web address, such as *cache:http://www.marketingprofs.com* to view the page that Google has cached.

Note that Googlebot must have downloaded the page for this to work.

define:

This is a useful operator for quickly obtaining several definitions from various online glossaries. Curious about the definition of “tipping point”? Simply type *define: tipping point* into Google.

{mathematical expression}

Enter any valid mathematical expression, and Google’s calculator function will interpret it for you. It will even do currency and measurement conversions for you, such as *100 dollars in euros*, or *8 ounces in cups*.

{time in location}

Google will display the local time and date for any location on Earth—all you have to do is tell it where. This takes into account time zone and daylight savings calculations according to the location’s rules. You can pass a city and country name, or a postal code.

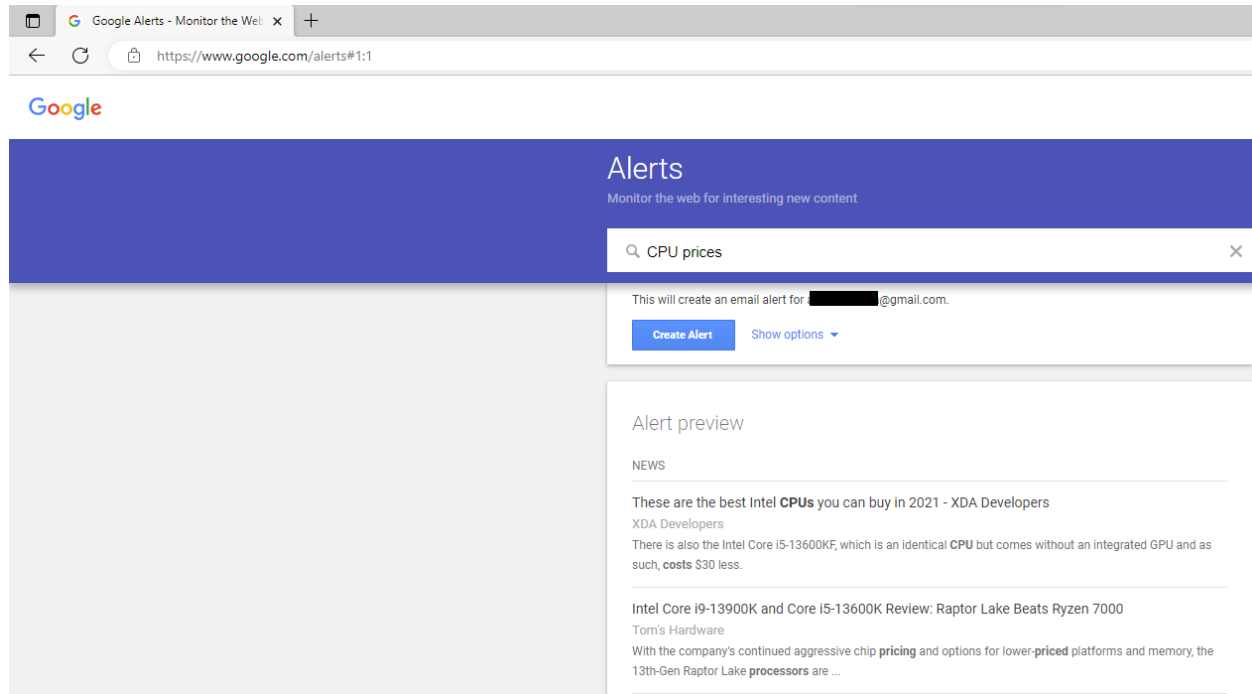
{weather in location}

Much like the time feature, Google can display a weather forecast for a given location, specified by a city and country, or a postal code. The top result is a four-day basic weather forecast.

3. More Searching

Monitor the web for content changes:

URL: <https://www.google.com/alerts>



Google Images

The Advanced Image Search page at http://images.google.com/advanced_image_search, allows you to refine your search by size, coloration, file type, and more. If you don't want to permanently set your image settings or if you want to adjust a query that has already been executed, you can use a parameter to restrict the results of a single query:

- &imgtype=face
- &imgtype=news
- &imgtype=photo
- &imgtype=clipart
- &imgtype=lineart

You can also click the Similar Images link below the results in a Google Images search to see results that Google has determined are similar.

You can sort images by color, size, style, or file type.



Advanced Image Search

Find images with...

all these words:

To do this in the search box.

Type the important words: winter hoarfrost

this exact word or phrase:

Put exact words in quotes: "frost flower"

any of these words:

Type OR between all the words you want: trees OR weeds OR grasses

none of these words:

Put a minus sign just before words that you don't want: -windows

Then narrow your results by...

image size:

Find images in any size you need.

aspect ratio:

Specify the shape of images.

colours in the image:

any colour full colour black & white transparent this colour

Find images in your preferred colours.

type of image:

Limit the kind of images that you find.

region:

Find images published in a particular region.

site or domain:

Search one site (like sfmoma.org) or limit your results to a domain like .edu, .org or .gov

SafeSearch:

Tell SafeSearch whether to filter sexually explicit content.

file type:

Find images in the format that you prefer.

usage rights:

Find images that you are free to use.

Advanced Search

You can also...

- [Find pages that are similar to a URL](#)
- [Search pages that you've visited](#)
- [Use operators in the search box](#)
- [Customise your search settings](#)