

Search Tools

ARE ALL SEARCH ENGINES ALIKE?

There are dozens of various search engines available on the Internet. Each works slightly different in it's search methods and each displays their results differently. No two search engines are exactly the same.

All search engines use software programs to match keyword and phrases and rank them for relevance. Search engine programs may be similar. They differ in areas such as size, speed, content and ranking scheme. Since no two search engines are alike, search options also vary among search engines. Below is a summary of typical search techniques. For updated information about specific search engines refer to the iTeacher eboard. "Search Engines" note on the "Tools" tab.

BOOLEAN SEARCHING

Boolean searching is a specialized search technique based on a system of logic developed by George Boole (1815-64). Boolean searching combines, eliminates and discriminates between terms or phrases by using the expressions such as **AND**, **OR**, and **NOT**. By applying Boolean expressions, you can limit your results to very specific information or broaden the scope of your search.

- **AND** – All words must be contained in the search results
- **OR** – Any of the words can be in the search results
- **NOT** – Must not contain the words in the search results

Boolean searching also utilizes parentheses to search for phrases and word clusters.

In addition to Boolean searching, most search engines support use of symbols to

narrow or expand search results according to specific criteria. Below are explanations of major symbols.

- **+** (plus sign)
Similar to **AND** the + sign requires that words or phrases appear in your search results, use a + sign before that word or phrase that you must have. (Do not leave a space between the + and words or phrases.)
NOTE: Any words that are not preceded by a symbol are generally considered "may have" terms, which means they may appear in the page, but they are not required to appear:
- **-** (minus sign)
Similar to **NOT** the minus sign is used to make sure that certain words **DO NOT** appear in your results. Place a - sign before the word or phrase (without a space). Any term that is not preceded by a symbol is generally considered a "may have" term, as above.
- **" "** (double quotes)
Use double quotes to focus your search on an exact phrase.
- *****(asterisk)
Truncating with an asterisk is used to search for variations of a word root. Use an * symbol to replace a series of letters. For example femini* will retrieve feminine, feminist, etc.
NOTE: Do not search for the plural of a word. Use the * to search for multiple forms of a root word.
- **%** (percent sign)
To replace a single letter in a word, use the % sign. This is useful for

commonly misspelled words or words that have multiple spellings.

- **Lower case**
Most search engines recognize case. Lower case will retrieve titles and capitalized letters. However search queries entered with upper case spellings generally do not retrieve lower case words. As a rule, use all lower case.
- **Link**
In Alta Vista you can get a list of pages that are linked to the page. In the search dialog box type in (lower case) link: (no space after :) and the URL without http://.
- **Title**
Using Alta Vista you can also search by title. In the search dialog box type in title: (title in lower case and no space between : and words). This will retrieve documents with the words you enter in the title.

Advanced Search

Often, simply adding more words to a broad query can help narrow it until you find what you want. Many search engines

also provide a variety of search features. Google's advanced search (http://www.google.com/advanced_search.html) simplifies your search by making it easy to apply the following attributes to your search.

- restrict your search to pages within a given website
- exclude pages from a particular web site
- restrict your search to pages only in a given language
- find all the pages that link to a given web page
- find pages that are related to a given web page

Below are reliable sources for getting the best search engines:

Search Tool Chart

<http://www.infopeople.org/search/chart.html>

Work with a partner to test your search skills

Quiz yourself

<http://www.quia.com/tq/106756.html>