

Top Search Tips

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At the end of our internet search workshops, participants are asked to come up with a collective top search tips. These can be search tools, individual web sites or search techniques. This is a compilation of the tips from several workshops over the past year.

- 1. It isn't your fault!** Results can vary from one minute to the next. You run your search a second time in Google and you get a completely different set of results. Don't worry - it isn't you. Google results are rarely consistent and can change from one moment to the next. If you are having serious difficulties getting any sense out of Google, don't struggle. Try another search engine e.g. Yahoo (<http://search.yahoo.co.uk>) or Bing (formerly Live) (<http://www.bing.com/>).
- 2. Get to know Google** Get to know the advanced search features of Google both on the advanced search screen and in the menus on the left hand side of your results page.
- 3. Use social media** search tools for the most up to date information. For example <http://search.twitter.com/> or <http://twazzup.com/> for Twitter, <http://blogsearch.google.com/> for blogs, Whos Talkin' (<http://www.whostalkin.com/>).
- 4. See what Google does with your search string.** If you use the search box on the home page and Google comes back with odd results, click on Advanced Search to see what it has done with your search terms.
- 5. Google Custom Search Engine** <http://www.google.com/cse/>. Create your own Google search engine that searches only the sites that you specify. Great if you are always searching the same sites day after day, or want to provide your users with a search tool covering a specific topic.
- 6. Google Squared** <http://www.google.com/squared/> Described as "fascinating" by some workshop participants. This attempts to pull information from the pages in your results and put it into a table. It is by no means perfect but has improved greatly since its introduction. One to watch.
- 7. Tripleme** <http://www.tripleme.com/> to display results from Google, Yahoo and Bing side by side. There is also a deduplicate button.
- 8. Docjax** (<http://www.docjax.com/>) for a quick and easy way to search Yahoo and Google for PowerPoint, Excel, PDF and Word files.
- 9. Cached copies.** Look at the search engines cached copy of a web page if you can't find your search terms in the document, or if the page is nothing like the description in the results list. You will see the version of the page that has been used by the search engine for indexing and with your terms highlighted.
- 10. Repeat the most important term** or terms in your search one or more times. For example 'beer market share France Belgium Czech' and 'beer market share France Belgium Czech Czech Czech' give different results.
- 11. Enter your search terms in a different order.** The search engines will rank and present your results differently
- 12. Remember that you are searching an out of date index** of the web when you are using Google et al. Google is the least up to date overall: Bing (<http://www.bing.com/>) seems to be the most frequently updated.
- 13. People search tools**, for example LinkedIn.com, 123People.com, pipl.com

14. Creative Commons and public domain images When searching for images that you can re-use on your web site, in a report or newsletter you need to be sure of what you can and can't do with them. Use one of the following tools that have creative commons or public domain images.

Geograph <http://www.geograph.org.uk/> "aims to collect geographically representative photographs and information for every square kilometre of Great Britain and Ireland"

Flickr Creative Commons <http://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/>.

Morguefile <http://www.morguefile.com/> A relatively small collection of images but good quality, high resolution.

Most images on US government web sites are public domain. These that are not are clearly labelled with copyright statements. All of NASA's images are also public domain.

Wikimedia Commons <http://commons.wikimedia.org/>. Use with care. There are disputes over the copyright of some images, notably photographs from the UK National Portrait Gallery. Always look at **the whole** of image's page to see if there could be problems.

15. Use the **Wayback Machine** (<http://www.archive.org/>) to see what was being said on a web site in the past or to track down "lost" documents and pages.

16. Blogpulse <http://www.blogpulse.com/>. Singled out because of the "Trend this" option which displays graphically how often your term or terms have occurred in blog postings over time.

17. Use tools such as **Browsys Finder** (<http://www.browsys.com/finder>) and **Zuula** (<http://www.zuula.com/>) for quick and easy access to a wide range of search tools covering different types of information. Enter your search once, click on the tab for the type of resource for which you are searching (video, images, reference, news etc.), and then work your way through the list of search engines.

18. If your search involves numbers, distances, weights, prices or measurements of any sort use the **numeric range** search in Google. For example: toblerone 1..5 kg to find online shops selling large bars of toblerone.

19. Make use of **proximity searching**.

a) Double quote marks around your search terms to force a phrase search works in all of the search engines. For example "carbon emissions trading"

b) In Google, use the asterisk to find your terms separated by one or more terms but close to one another.

c) The Exalead NEAR command finds words within a maximum of 16 terms within each other. You can control the degree of separation by using NEAR/n where 'n' is a number specified by you.

20. Exalead's Chromatik (<http://chromatik.labs.exalead.com/>) enables you to search image tags by keyword and then select one or more colours that you want as major components of the image. Although Exalead does now have a colour option in its main image search it is not as sophisticated as Chromatik