



QUICK TIPS --Searching

NOTE: These tips will work with most search engines in their basic search option.

1. Use the plus (+) and minus (-) signs in front of words to force their inclusion and/or exclusion in searches.
EXAMPLE: +anorexia -bulimia
(NO space between the sign and the keyword)
2. Use double quotation marks (" ") around phrases to ensure they are searched exactly as is, with the words side by side in the same order.
EXAMPLE: "Bye bye Miss American Pie"
(Do NOT put quotation marks around a single word.)
3. Put your most important keywords first in the string.
EXAMPLE: +hybrid electric gas vehicle
4. Type keywords and phrases in lower case to find both lower and upper case versions. Typing capital letters will usually return only an exact match.
EXAMPLE: *president* retrieves both *president* and *President*
5. Use truncation and wildcards (e.g., *) to look for variations in spelling and word form.
EXAMPLE: librar* returns library, libraries, librarian, etc.
6. Combine phrases with keywords, using the double quotes and the plus (+) and/or minus (-) signs.
EXAMPLE: +"lung cancer" +bronchitis -smoking
(In this case, if you use a keyword with a +sign, you must put the +sign in front of the phrase as well. When searching for a phrase alone, the +sign is not necessary.)
7. When searching a document for your keyword(s), use the "find" command on that page.
8. Know the default settings your search engine uses (OR or AND). This will have an effect on how you configure your search statement because, if you don't use any signs (+, - " "), the engine will default to its own settings.
9. Know whether or not the search engine you are using maintains a **stop word* list. If it does, don't use known stop words in your search statement. Also, consider trying your search on another engine that does not recognize stop words.

Quick Tips for Boolean Searches

10. In Boolean searches, always enclose OR statements in parentheses.
EXAMPLE: "financial aid" AND (college OR university)
11. Always use CAPS when typing Boolean operators in your search statements. Most engines require that the operators (AND, OR, AND NOT/NOT) be capitalized. Other engines will accept either CAPS or lower case, so you're on safe ground if you stick to CAPS.
EXAMPLE: "eating disorder" AND (bulimia OR anorexia)

*STOP WORDS

Stop words are words that many search engines DON'T stop for when searching texts and titles on the web. In fact, in order to cut down on response time, these engines routinely ignore stop words, i.e., small and common words, such as parts of speech (adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, or forms of "to be"). Examples include: a, an, and, as, at, be, if, into, it, of, on, or, the, to, with, etc. Not all search engines recognize the same stop words. In addition, their lists can and do change frequently. If you initiate a search at a site that maintains a list of stop words and you type any of those words into your search statement (even in phrases surrounded by quotes), they will be ignored. The exception to this is the [Google](#) search engine, which has a stop word list but recognizes stop words within phrases surrounded by quotation marks, e.g., "to be or not to be" or "what you see is what you get".