

Search Tools

Definition - Utilities available on the Internet to help you find information among the millions of documents on the Web. **Search Tools** are categorized into three types: Internet Directories, Search Engines and Meta-Search Engines. Each type of searching tool accomplishes a different task and locates information in a different way. For example, an Internet directory will classify information by topic and also allows you to choose one of the topics or type a keyword or phrase to search. A search engine will search the entire contents of the Internet by keyword(s). A meta-search engine will search a dozen different search engines and directories simultaneously and display the ten best responses from each search engine.

Search Engines

AltaVista- <http://altavista.com> - searches through more than 50 million Web pages. Use "+" to indicate words that must be contained on a page. Use "-" for words that must not be contained on pages. Quotation marks must be used for searching phrases.

KidsClick <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/KidsClick> - a database of more than 5,000 records of interest to kids.

MathSearch - <http://www.maths.usyd.edu.au/MathSearch.html> - More than 190,000 Web documents from mathematics and statistics servers.

Subject Directories

Yahooligans - <http://www.yahooligans.com> A student-friendly Search tool allowing students to browse and do subject category searches. Lycos: <http://www.lycos.com> A very large database. It has specialty areas for locating

Librarian's Index to the Internet: <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/InternetIndex>

Meta-Search

DogPile: <http://www.dogpile.com>

Metacrawler: <http://www.metacrawler.com>

Student oriented search tools - Use these engines to limit the access to material with adult content or to academic based information. These may be very helpful in instructional settings, but may also limit the response based on the findings within the material.

Kids Click - <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/KidsClick> - A super site for students to use for searching

Yahooligans - <http://www.yahooligans.com> - Combines a friendly interface with Based on the Excite engine, this site returns student safe material.

AskJeeves for Kids: <http://www.ajkids.com>

Subject Guides may be very helpful in instructional settings.

MathSearch <http://www.maths.usyd.edu.au/MathSearch.html>

Specialized Databases provided access to specific types of information

ERIC Database <http://www.accesseric.org> Find citations for journal articles and ERIC documents.

Midi.com <http://www.midi.com> A collection of song/midi files

AltaVista has always been a widely used search engine because it works quickly, updates regularly and scans documents for every word. Try to take the following ride on the information highway searching for information. (This exercise was created by Pati Terry from Virginia Beach, VA)

1. Go to the Alta Vista Web site at <http://www.altavista.com> Read each section, try the strategy listed. Record your results! You can then redo the exercise using other search tools.

1. Use the "+" and the "-" operators:

Prefix your search words with the "+" to indicate that they MUST occur in a page to be considered a hit, and use "-" to exclude pages. For example

+seals +habitat

will find only pages that contain BOTH words. If you omit the "+" you will get some pages about seals, some about habitat, and any pages containing both words. In this example, the difference is 437,540 v. 10,550 matches. By adding an exclusion term as shown below, the number of hits drops to 9,880.

+ "seal habitat" -zoo

2. Use quotes for phrases

10,000 matches are still too many. If you really want to find seal habitat (and not just pages with those words) put the request inside quotation marks. The search

`+ "seal habitat" -zoo`

yields only 69 hits! This is a manageable number

3. Use the "host" and "domain" keywords

Try looking for a specific word at just one website by using a search like this:

`+ "seal" +host: www.aqua.org`

`+ "baby seal" +host: hedweb.com`

The first will find articles about seals published only by the National Aquarium in Baltimore, and yields just 34 hits. The second, using hedweb found only 6 hits.

You can also exclude a website or an entire domain from a search:

`+ "baby seal" -domain: com (then exclude these) -domain: net -domain: org`

This example eliminates all documents from an entire domain (commercial), and the addition of other domains eliminates those as well.

4. Use the "title" keyword

If you're looking for pages on a specific topic, instead of pages that just contain certain words, try limiting your search like so:

`title: "baby_seal"`

This often helps to weed out unwanted hits. The fact that someone bothered to categorize their page with a <TITLE> keyword should help you get better quality matching documents. Of course, some words will be specific to get results.

5. Use the "image" keyword

Looking for a special photo or icon? Try something like this:

`image: baby_seal.jpg`

`+image: seal* +host: hedweb.com`

The first should be obvious, the second uses a wildcard (*) to find any image whose name starts with "seal", whether gif or jpg, but only on the hedweb

website. NOTE** - You can also find images by clicking the "Image" tag on the opening page of AltaVista and type the name of the picture you are seeking.

6. Use the "link" and "URL" keyboard

The "link" keyword finds pages that contain a link to another pages, and the "url" keyword finds pages with specific characters in the address. Here are some examples:

link: whitehouse.gov - finds pages linked to the official WhiteHouse site

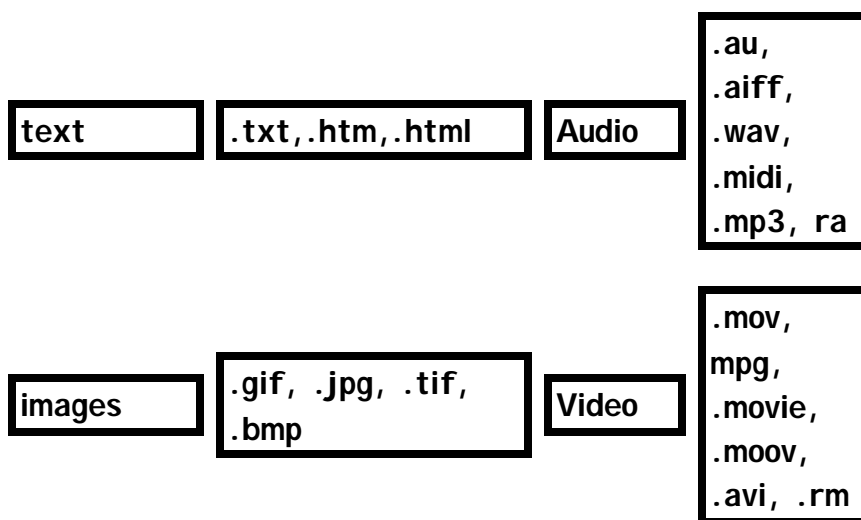
url: worksheet - finds pages with "worksheet" in the address

7. Multimedia Searches

Searching for specific forms of multimedia on the Internet is relatively easy. In addition to identifying your major topic or theme, consider adding the file extension type to your search. For example, to locate a sound file for a wolf you might use

+wolf.wav

The extensions used for the various media formats may include:



Test your browser's ability to handle various formats at:

<http://www.uncwil.edu/tc/mptest>