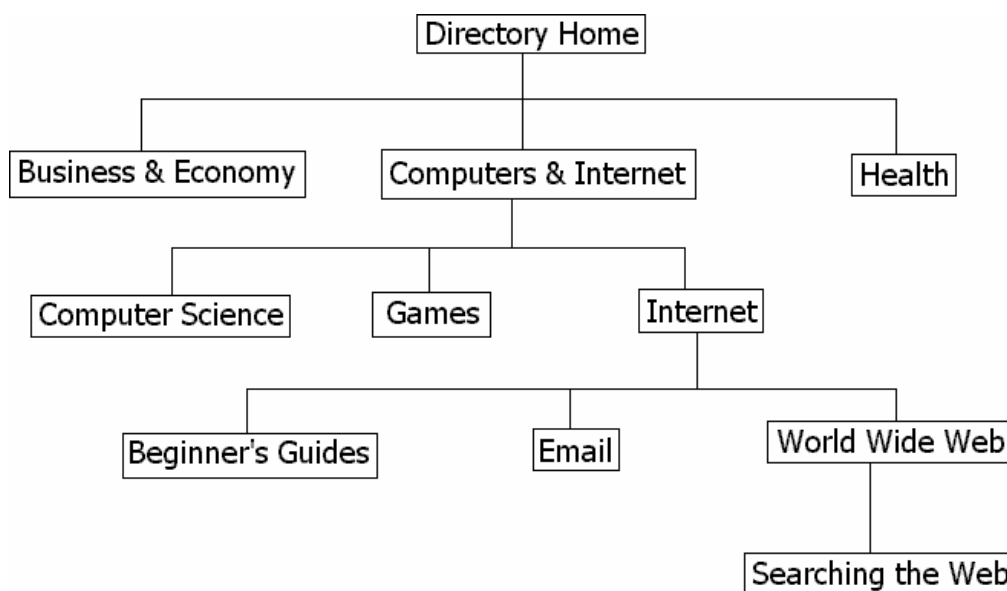




Finding Stuff Online

Subject Directories

Subject directories consist of groups of Web pages with lists of links to Web sites, which are organized by people into categories by subject. These categories are arranged in a hierarchy that goes from general to more specific, as shown here in a simplified example:



To navigate through the hierarchy, simply click on the category you wish to explore. That will take you to the next, more specific level of the hierarchy. Once you get far enough down in the hierarchy, you will see a list of links to Web sites that fit the category.

Some of the many general subject directories available online are:

- **Yahoo! Directory** – <http://dir.yahoo.com>
Very large, great for finding information on popular and commercial topics.
- **Librarians' Index to the Internet** – <http://lii.org>
Reliable, well-organized, with resources selected and annotated by librarians.
- **Open Directory Project** – <http://dmoz.org>
Very large, run by a global community of volunteers.
- **Yahooligans! Directory** – <http://yahooligans.com>
Like the Yahoo! Directory, but geared toward kids.

Features of Subject Directories	Reasons to Use Subject Directories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchical structure provides a context within which to browse. • Synonyms, cross references, and relationships are indicated. • Category names chosen are not standardized and may vary. • Naturally limited number of Web sites included. • Selected Web sites are evaluated and chosen for their quality by people. • Links often lead to the top level or homepage of a Web site. • Can include Web sites that search engines cannot "find." • Must be updated by hand, so may get out-of-date quickly. • Some include a search function. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You're looking for a broad overview of a topic, what your topic is "about." • You are not sure which keywords best describe what you're trying to find. • You're searching for words with multiple meanings. • You want only the best quality resources and a limited number of results to sift through. • You want to see how your topic is related to other topics to broaden your search.

Targeted Subject Directories

Targeted subject directories concentrate on a single subject or a small group of closely related subjects. They are narrower in focus and contain fewer Web sites than general subject directories. Experts in the subject often compile them and keep them up to date.

Some examples of specialized subject directories are:

- **World Wide Arts Resources** – <http://wwar.com/browse.html>
Includes Web sites about artists, art history, museums, dance, and theater.
- **Odden's Bookmarks** – <http://oddens.geog.uu.nl>
Covers many aspects of "the fascinating world of maps and mapping."
- **Internet Intelligence Index** – <http://www.fuld.com/i3>
Organizes business and industry-related topics.
- **WWWomen.com** – <http://www.wwwomen.com>
Uses categories and chooses Web sites geared toward women.

You can find many more targeted subject directories by browsing general subject directories or by using a search engine and typing "directories" as a keyword along with keywords representing your topic.

Search Engines

Search engines help you find Web sites and specific information on Web sites by matching words you choose to represent what you are looking for (keywords) with words that are actually part of Web sites.

Some of the most popular and useful search engines are:

- Google** <http://www.google.com>
- Yahoo!** <http://www.yahoo.com>
- AltaVista** <http://www.altavista.com>
- HotBot** <http://www.hotbot.com>



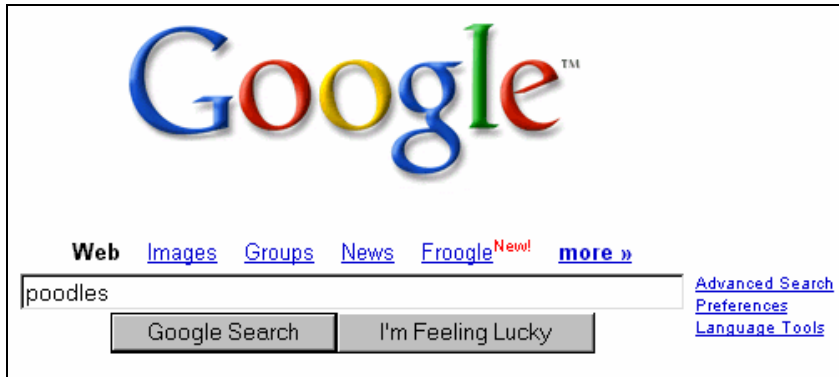
“Meta search engines” search the World Wide Web by using more than one search engine at once and combining the results.

Some good meta search engines are:

- Dogpile** <http://www.dogpile.com>
- MetaCrawler** <http://www.metacrawler.com>

Features of Search Engines	Reasons to Use Search Engines
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Built and controlled by computers, not people.• Only a portion of all Web sites on the World Wide Web is indexed and retrievable by a single search engine, but there is no size restriction.• Allows for searching the full text of Web pages using keywords.• Results are often sorted by their relevance to, or how close they match, your keywords.• Provides access to all levels of a Web site, not just the homepage.• Results are biased towards text and often miss images, sound, and video.• No quality control or human intervention.• Some include a subject directory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You are doing an exhaustive search and wish to find all possible information on your topic.• Your topic is a narrow aspect of a broader, common topic.• You are not sure what broader subject or category your topic falls under.• You are looking for very specific pieces of information.• Your topic is too obscure or too current to be found in most subject directories.

As an example, here is what you'll see on the basic search screen for Google:

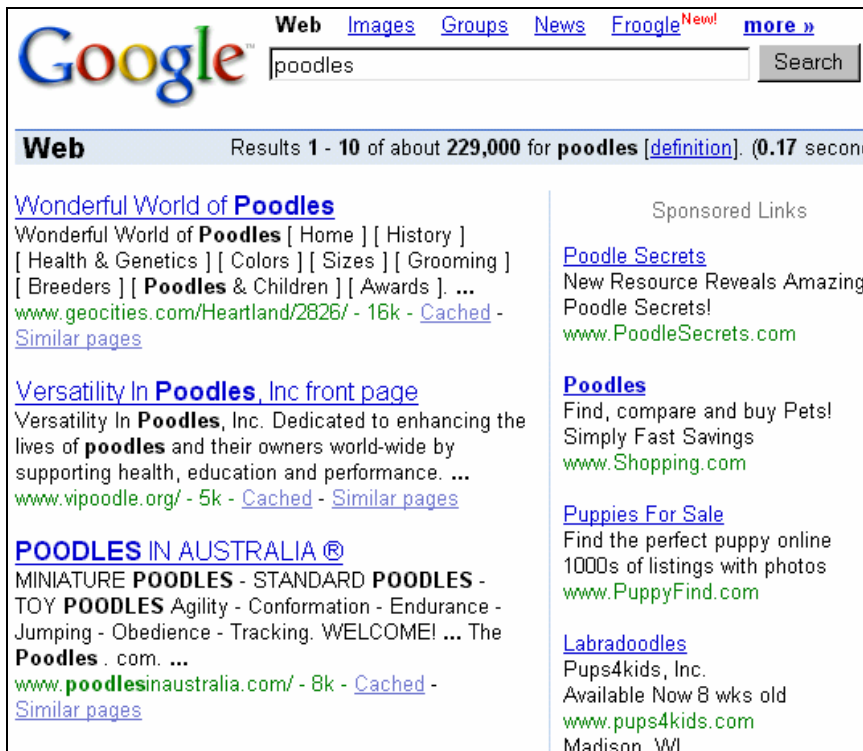


HINT: If you just want to search for pictures, you can click on the [Images](#) link right above the search box.

Steps in doing a basic search using Google:

1. Decide what information you want to find and what words best represent that information.
2. Type those words into the search box—like “poodles” in the image above.
3. Click on the Google Search button below the search box to get a list of Web pages that match the words you typed in. These are called “results” or “hits.”
4. Look through the list of results, read the descriptions, and click on the links for those that look like they might have the information you’re looking for. The most popular and relevant sites are often listed first.

This is what the list of results will look like if you do a search using the word “poodles”:



Each page will contain 10 results. You will have to click on the [Next](#) link at the bottom of the page to get to the next 10 results.

The column on the left is the list of results for your search. Click on the titles to go to the Web sites.

The column on the right is a list of advertisements, or links to Web sites that paid Google to include them in your results.

Advanced Searching

Many search engines allow you to perform an advanced search, which has more options and allows you to focus your search so that you get better results. For example:

Google **Advanced Search** [Advanced Search Tips](#) | [About Google](#)

Find results with **all** of the words 10 results
with the **exact phrase**
with **at least one** of the words
without the words

Language Return pages written in **Only find pages in a certain language.**

File Format return results of the file format

Date Return web pages updated in the **Only find recently updated pages.**

Numeric Range Return web pages containing numbers between and

Occurrences Return results where my terms occur

Domain return results from the site or domain
e.g. google.com, .org [More info](#)

SafeSearch No filtering Filter using [SafeSearch](#)

Limit results by specific Web site or type of Web site (government, educational, etc.).

Froogle Product Search (BETA)

Products Find products for sale
To browse for products, start at the [Froogle home page](#)

Find pages like a certain other page.

Page-Specific Search

Similar Find pages similar to the page
e.g. [www.google.com/help.html](#)

Links Find pages that link to the page

Targeted Search Engines

Like targeted subject directories, targeted search engines concentrate on a single subject and will only find Web pages specifically on that subject. Examples include:

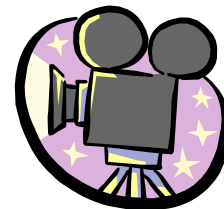
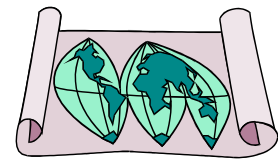
- **FirstGov.gov** – <http://www.firstgov.gov>
Finds only Web pages published by the U.S. government.
- **FindLaw LawCrawler** – <http://lawcrawler.findlaw.com>
Limits results to legal Web sites and databases.
- **SearchEdu.com** – <http://www.searchedu.com>
Finds only education-related Web sites.
- **PsychCrawler** – <http://www.psychcrawler.com>
The American Psychological Association's search engine.

Specialized Searching

Certain types of information are difficult, time-consuming, and sometimes even impossible to find directly using subject directories and search engines. For those types of information, it is best to turn to a Web site that specializes in providing that type of information. These Web sites have their own search forms that allow them to match your keywords with the information they have available.

Some Web sites that are excellent for specialized searching are:

- **Switchboard** – <http://www.switchboard.com>
The online equivalent of a paper phonebook. Look up phone numbers and addresses of both businesses and people. More Web sites like this, including ones that perform reverse lookups, can be found on the library's Web site at <http://www.midlibrary.org>, on the "Directories" page.
- **MapQuest** – <http://www.mapquest.com>
Type in an address to get an interactive street map of an area. Also find U.S. businesses by name or type.
- **American Factfinder** – <http://factfinder.census.gov>
Search for demographic data, such as population, housing, economic, and geographic statistics. Compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Quotations at Bartleby.com** – <http://www.bartleby.com/quotations>
The largest online quotation database. Look up famous quotations, both contemporary and classic, by keyword.
- **BigCharts** – <http://bigcharts.marketwatch.com>
Look up both current and historical stock quotes and charts.
- **Merriam-Webster Online** – <http://www.m-w.com>
Look up words in the online versions of Merriam-Webster's dictionary and thesaurus. You can even hear how words are pronounced.
- **United States Patent and Trademark Office** -- <http://www.uspto.gov>
Search full-text databases for patents and trademarks issued by the U.S. government.
- **The Internet Movie Database** – <http://us.imdb.com>
A huge, up-to-date database of information on movies, actors, and all things related. Search for movies by title, character, plot, quotation, actor, and director.
- **Epicurious** – <http://www.epicurious.com/recipes>
Search for recipes of all types by name, course, cuisine, ingredient, occasion, and much more. Recipes are collection from Bon Appetit, Gourmet, and SELF magazines.



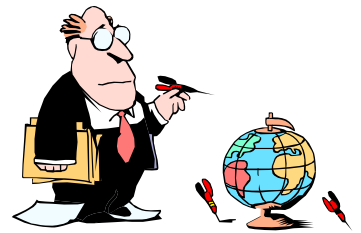
Search Strategies

The basic steps to searching for information online are:

1. Determine what your question is or what information you are looking for.
2. Figure out what keywords best represent your question or the information you are trying to find.
3. Type in your keywords and perform the search.
4. Examine the results you get.
5. Try again if you did not find the information you were looking for.

If the keywords you choose get you no results, not the right results, or too many results, try the following keyword tips, which will work with most search engines:

- Choose more specific keywords. If you are looking for information about roses, you should use "roses" as a keyword, not "flowers." If you don't get any results, however, you may have to pick more general words to search with.
- Place quotation marks around phrases and names. Ex. "affirmative action" and "Tom Cruise"
- Type a "+" in front of additional keywords that must be included in the results. Ex. hairstyles +men
- Type a "-" in front of additional keywords that must NOT be included in the results. Ex. bass -music
- Type "OR" between keywords if you want to get results with either one term or the other. Ex. alligators OR crocodiles
- Include synonyms, equivalent terms, or variant spellings and word endings. Use "1800s" as a keyword as well as "nineteenth century." This is an ideal situation in which to use "OR" to combine keywords.
- If you want to widen your search, use fewer and/or more general keywords.



Other strategies that will help make your searches more successful:

- Try your search with **more than one search engine**. Each search engine has access to only a small portion of the information available on the World Wide Web. Using more than one search engine raises your chances of finding exactly what you are looking for.
- Look at the **"Help" pages** for each search engine you use. Most search engines have guides to help you use them more efficiently and effectively. Not all search engines are the same, and the "Help" pages will show you tips and tricks for those particular search engines.
- Use **advanced search options** for each search engine to get more accurate, focused results.

For an excellent tutorial on Internet search strategies, check out this Web page:

Finding Information on the Internet: Recommended Search Strategy

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Strategies.html>

Evaluation of Web Content

Anyone anywhere can create a Web site and publish it on the World Wide Web. When you're searching for information online, you need to examine Web pages to make sure they have reliable information.

Questions to ask when evaluating Web sites:

- Who created the Web site? Are they experts? What are their credentials?
- Is this an official or unofficial Web site? It is biased?
- What is the purpose of the Web site? Are they trying to sell something?
- Is the site current? When was it created? When was it last updated?

A more complete set of questions and methods for finding answers to those questions is included on page 9 of this handout.

Examining the URL

The URL or Web address of a Web page can tell a lot about the type and quality of information it contains. Here are some hints:

- Look at the domain to see what type of Web site it is:
 - Commercial sites = .com, .biz
 - Government sites = .gov, .mil, .us, or other country codes
 - Educational sites = .edu, .museum
 - Non-profit organization sites = .org
- Personal pages may contain names following a tilde. Ex. ~fsmith
- The domain name will tell who is responsible for publishing the information. A domain of nytimes.com means the information comes from The New York Times.

Further Reading

These books, available from the library, will help you learn more about searching the World Wide Web and finding information online:

The Extreme Searcher's Guide to Web Search Engines by Randolph Hock

Finding Statistics Online by Paula Berinstein

Genealogy Online by Elizabeth Powell Crowe

Google for Dummies by Brad Hill

Government on the Net by James Evans

The Professional's Guide to Mining the Internet by Brian Clegg

Public Records Online by Michael Sankey & Peter Weber

World Wide Web Searching for Dummies by Brad Hill

Yahoo!: The Ultimate Guide to the Internet edited by H.P. Newquist

Web Site Evaluation Guide

Evaluation Criteria	Questions and Techniques
Relevance	<p>Question: Does this site provide the type of information I need?</p> <p>Techniques: Look for a Site Index, Site Map, or Table of Contents page to get a quick sense of what's available.</p>
Purpose	<p>Questions: Is the purpose to inform or provide news, to explain or document, to persuade, advocate, or sell? Does the site meet its stated purpose?</p> <p>Technique: Examine "About this site" pages for an indication of intent.</p>
Authority	<p>Question: Does the author have appropriate education, training, or experience to write with authority on this topic?</p> <p>Techniques: Look for a biographical statement, resume, or background on the organizational "author." Check other writings by or about this author (use online catalogs or periodical indexes).</p>
Publisher or host	<p>Questions: Is this an official or unofficial site? Does the Internet host site or "publisher" offer links back to this site from its own pages?</p> <p>Technique: Follow links back to host site page or enter the URL for the top level domain.</p>
Content accuracy, Bias	<p>Questions: Are the sources of information presented at the site clearly indicated? What types of resources are used to support arguments? Does the author attempt to substantiate controversial claims? Are there references to alternative points of view? Is the author affiliated with any organization that may have a "vested interest" in the topic?</p> <p>Techniques: Look carefully at strongly worded assertions for supporting evidence and documentation. Pay attention to the tone of the writing. In some cases, you may want to check against other published sources.</p>
Coverage	<p>Question: Do other sites cover topics or aspects that are missing from this site?</p> <p>Technique: Compare to other Web sites on the same topic.</p>
Currency	<p>Questions: Can you tell when the material was written? Is the site well maintained (e.g. links functional)? Is there evidence of newly added information or links?</p> <p>Techniques: Look at page creation, revision dates. Check any "What's New" pages.</p>
Recognitions	<p>Questions: Has this site been generally recognized by others as reliable, by reviews or by others linking to it? How did you locate it initially – from a reference in an online "guide" source or by a keyword search?</p> <p>Techniques: Look at any formal evaluations or review of the site. Search for other sites which have linked to this page.</p>

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