

Tips for Searching



ASIA

By Judith S. Ames

We have all heard the expression “Google it.” Indeed, when most of us are looking for information on the Internet, that is precisely what we do: We enter search terms in Google and hope for the best. However, there are tips and tools that can help you become a more skilled Internet searcher, and this article includes examples that give you tools to understand options, focus your search, and improve your results. Google is the most popular search engine, and its features will be the focus here.

A Google search can yield thousands of results, and many may not pertain to what you want or need. However, there are ways to optimize your search and filter out results that don’t fit your needs. Depending on your goal, you can narrow your search and increase the probability of finding information by adding date ranges, operators, formatting, and other options. An operator is a symbol you can add in the search box to focus your results. Adding operators helps focus the search on more relevant and pertinent results. There is no need to memorize these operators because they are incorporated into your search when you choose “Advanced search.” This article will include many examples, for it is only with examples, rather than generalizations, that the power of good searching can be understood and readers can gain the tools to understand options that are available to focus searches and improve their results.

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Strategy

To begin a search, formulate a strategy. Consider the end goal, and choose a few well-targeted words. It can sometimes be challenging to find the right combination of words or phrases, but results from a first search can give clues about what to include or omit on the next search to narrow results.

If the first search doesn’t yield desired results, filter or refine the keywords from the initial query. Search results may not be “perfect” on the first search, and a serial search may yield a more specific outcome. It can be tempting to scan only the first page of results, but subsequent pages may have useful results, too. In viewing results, many people will only look at the first page because the most relevant results will be listed first. However, often the best results can be located on ensuing pages; thus, looking at more than one page of results is a good procedure.

Some searches are less involved than others. For instance, an easy search is one that looks for a specific person, place, thing, or event. “Indira Gandhi,” “Bangkok,” or “1900 Boxer Rebellion” are examples of searches that return predicted results. However, broad subjects like “Asian Music” or “Indian Spices” require a more careful selection of search terms. Less targeted search terms return less targeted results.

Search Terms and Techniques

Usually, the search goal is to locate relevant, precise results on the first try, so avoid words that bloat the query. Instead of “Where in Japan is the garden named Korakuen?” use “Japan garden Korakuen” or, more simply, “Japan Korakuen.” The other words are not necessary; Google automatically eliminates words that do not relate to the search.

When the search is more general than a specific person or place name, additional details may yield more useful results. Broad search terms like “Asian Music” or “Indian Spices” may not return the desired outcomes, but the results give you clues that will help refine your search. For example, “Partition India” is a less targeted search than “Partition India 1947.” The more specific the term(s), the greater the likelihood the search will return the desired results, but it may be difficult to be specific on the first search. For instance, you might be looking for the World War II document that established Japanese-American internment camps but cannot remember the document name or title. Your first search uses the terms “Japanese internment document,” which returns “Executive Order 9066.” You recognize the document name and choose this link, but you may decide to search further and use the document’s name as your second search (see Figures 1 and 2). Your second, more targeted search reveals an abundance of information on Executive Order 9066.

Some searches can provide the desired information without the need to click through to the site. Here are examples of several of these quick searches:

Time search: [Time Korea] will show you the current time in Korea.

Weather search: [Weather Lahore] gives the current weather in Lahore.

Flight arrivals and departures: [JAL3005] will give the latest information on JAL’s flight 3005.

Currency: [USD in rupiah] provides the latest exchange rate for dollars and the Indonesian rupiah.

Size conversions: [ten miles to kilometers] or [six quarts to liters] will instantly show results for these conversions.

Definitions: [Definition noh] will give a brief definition of noh.

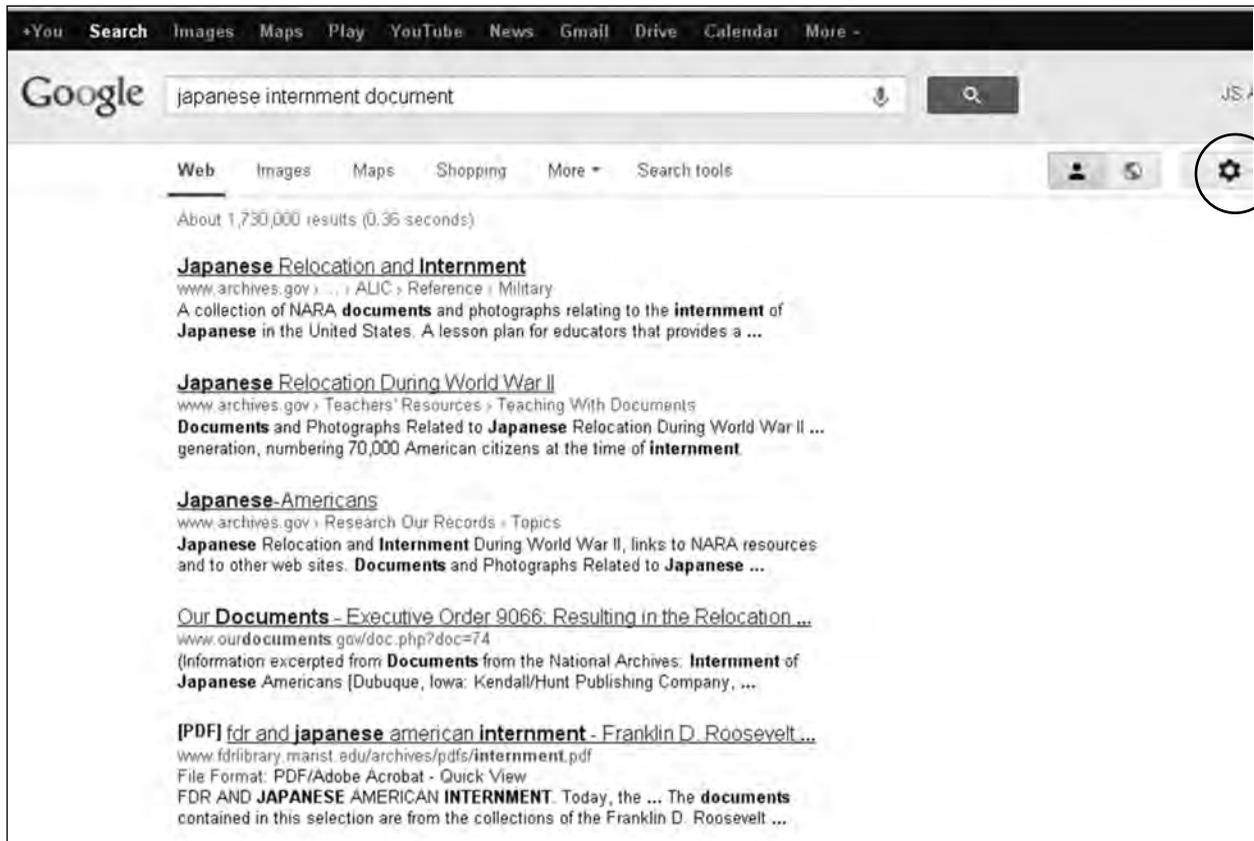


Figure 1: Search terms: Japanese internment document.

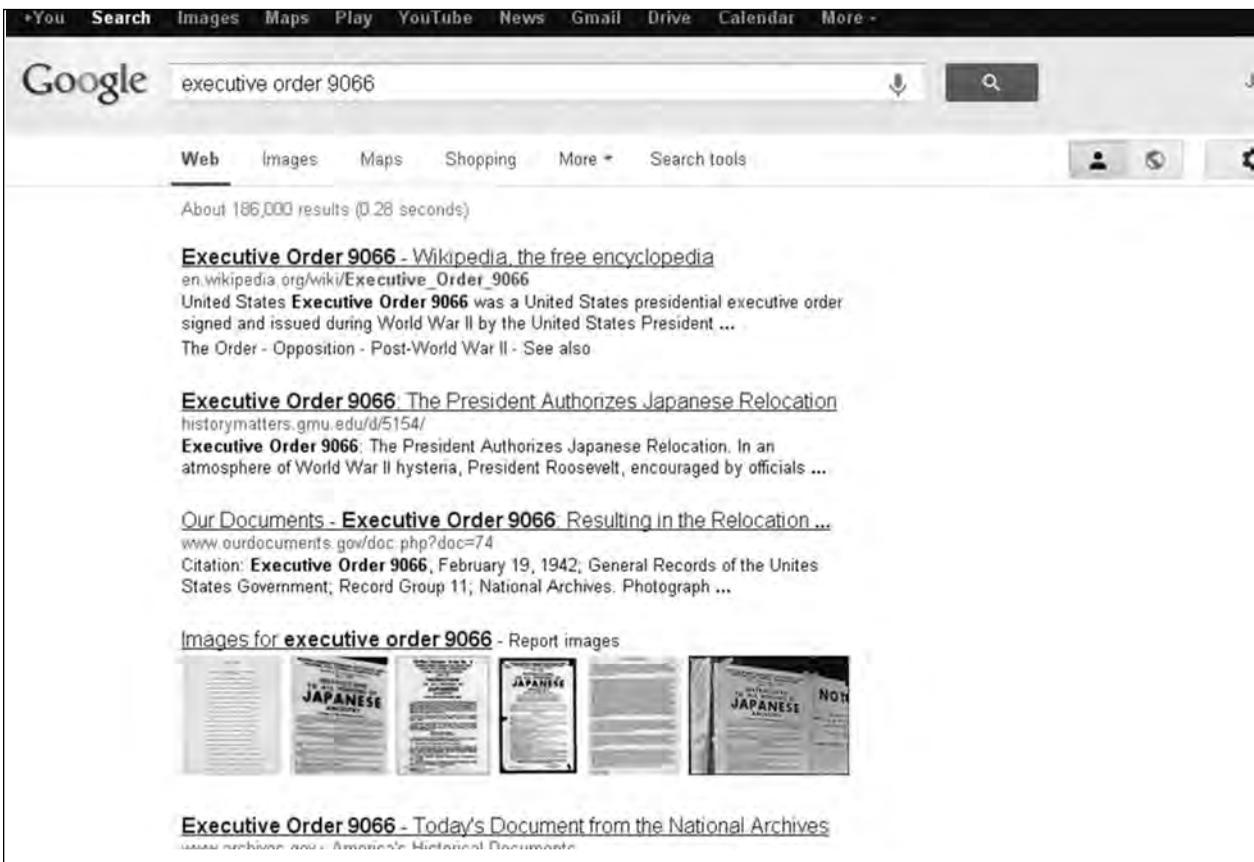


Figure 2: Search terms: Executive Order 9066.

In summary, using a small set of specific terms, sometimes in more than one search, can be a good strategy. According to Google’s “Help” literature, the words you are looking for should be in your answers, not your questions. Think about what you are hoping to find.

Operators

An operator is a symbol placed before one or more search terms. The function of an operator is to eliminate nonpertinent results and focus more directly on the information the user seeks. For example, when searching for a biography of Sun Yat-sen, an operator helps eliminate results pertaining to the sun. Searches normally look first for all words in a query and then look for each word individually. The further down on the list of results, the fewer the search terms found. So if you search for “A,B,C,D,E,” the first results may con-

tain five of the terms; lower down, perhaps just four of the terms and then three of the terms were found. This is one reason that many searchers will only look at the first and second pages of the results and go no further.

Type the following symbol operators directly into the search box or go to “Advanced search” under the gear symbol in the right corner of the screen, where operator choices are listed. See Table 1.

There are also operators expressed with words instead of symbols. See Table 2.

Search Results

Some searches can yield thousands of results, and many will be irrelevant. However, search techniques may be utilized to create more narrow and useful results. For example, when a teacher is looking for information about an

Operators with symbols	
Operator	Result
[terms]	Inserting one’s terms in brackets limits the search to the exact words between the brackets. This operator is useful when looking for song lyrics, speeches, or specific text.
- [terms]	Using the minus symbol before search terms excludes terms from the search results. This can be helpful when terms have more than one reference. For example, if one searches for “Nehru,” the results might include the hospital and/or the university named after him. If that is not what you are looking for, use the minus symbol in the search in this way: [Nehru –university –hospital].
~[terms]	Inserting the tilde (~) instructs Google to look for synonyms of the word(s) following the tilde. With the search [Japan diet ~food], the results will show sites for foods, recipes, and eating habits in Japan. If the search were [Japanese Diet ~government], the results would show links to sites about Japan’s National Diet and its form of government.
[term]*[term]	The asterisk is the “wildcard” operator. If one cannot recall an intermediary term in a title, expression, or quote, the asterisk will help. For example, if the name of this publication is only partially recalled, you can search for [Education*Asia] and find results with “Education” as the first term and “Asia” as the last term, with a variety of words in between.
[terms] or [terms]	Using “or” instructs the search engine to look for either term but not both of them. Thus, a search like [Korean] OR [Japanese] food will return pages on Korean food and on Japanese food separately and not search both Korean and Japanese food on the same site.

Table 1.

Operators with words	
Operator	Result
site:[domain]	This useful operator directs your search within a specific domain rather than the entire Internet. For example, one might want to know about the boxing competition results for China in the 2008 Beijing Games. Once you know the site you want to search, the query might read [boxing medals for China site:en.beijing2008.cn]. The search will only look at the site en.beijing2008.cn for information about boxing medals. This type of search is often used to read about the perspective of a particular journal or newspaper. One could search [boxing medals for China site:chinadaily.com.cn/index.html] to find only the reporting of <i>China Daily</i> . This specialized search would be [TOPIC site:URL of site to search]
filetype:[extension]	Use this operator sequence when you want a particular type of document: doc, pdf, html, or jpg. For example [lesson plans Tibet filetype:pdf] would bring up only pdf files pertaining to lesson plans about Tibet.

Table 2.

Asian country, especially a lesser-known country, having a map or images of the native dress can be included in the search results by choosing certain options on the search results page. On the results page, click near the top of the page on “Search tools.” Three options will appear; select “All results.” In the drop-down menu, choose “Sites with images.” By clicking on this choice, only sites with images will appear in the results page, often with thumbnails of some of the images on that site.

This same drop-down menu also has other narrowing choices. One that might be helpful to teachers is the “Reading level” option. This option provides a breakdown of the sites by basic, intermediate, and advanced reading levels, a real boon for teachers looking for age-appropriate websites.

A time range can also be included in the “Search tools” link. If one is looking for the most recent information or analysis of an event, the results can be narrowed to the past day, week, or year by using the “Custom range” option in the “Any time” drop-down menu. If, for example, one wishes to read about reactions to the first Gulf War at the time that the war was being fought, one might enter “5/15/1990” to “3/30/1991.” Click on the link “Any time” on the Search tools menu, and results will be limited to the date parameters you entered.

Navigating Results—CTRL+F

At times, one gets a result where the search terms are difficult to find within the selected website. Suppose you have searched for the role of Person X in a certain episode of World War II, and you have located a document that describes this episode in detail; it is just what you’re looking for. You discover upon clicking the link, though, that the document is fifty pages long. How, then, does one find Person X in this welter of pages? Scrolling down page by page can be time-consuming, especially if Person X appears near the end of the document. A quick way to jump through the document, landing on Person X’s name each time (with just a keystroke), is to use CTRL+F and enter the search term(s). This takes you instantly to the first appearance of that term in the document and all subsequent ones.

Google Scholar

Google Scholar can be especially helpful for *EAA* readers because it produces results from indexed scholarly literature, court opinions, journal

The more specific the term(s), the greater the likelihood the search will return the desired results . . .

abstracts, and other more specialized academic information. To access Google Scholar, type [Google scholar], [scholar], or use the URL scholar.google.com.

Search terms in Google Scholar can be similar to those used in basic Google. The results pages are different, however. Check Figures 3 (regular Google) and 4 (Google Scholar) to see the differences in the results pages for the identical search terms. The results for Google Scholar provide the article or book title; the author; the publication date; and if it is an article, the title of the journal. In addition, there are links to “Cited by” and “Related articles.” The “Cited by” link connects to other articles that have cited this book or article and are useful to find additional, similar resources. The number of citations also gives a notion of the popularity of the article. The “Related articles” link goes to other articles on the same topic. (Some people use “cited by” to check their own publications to see who has used their work and how it is being used.) In the left pane of Scholar results are date limiters and sorting options. There is an “Alert” link that notifies you when new articles on similar subjects are released.

Google Blogs

A blog is an online, publicly accessible journal, typically owned by an individual or group of users, which reflects the personality of the author(s) and is updated frequently to record opinions or share information. Including blogs in your search can be useful when you want current information or opinion on your search topic because blogs can be updated easily both by the blogger and by reader comments. Reader comments on the blog can help ascertain whether the blog author is considered reliable. There have been occasions when outrageous statements have been tempered by the readers of a blog.

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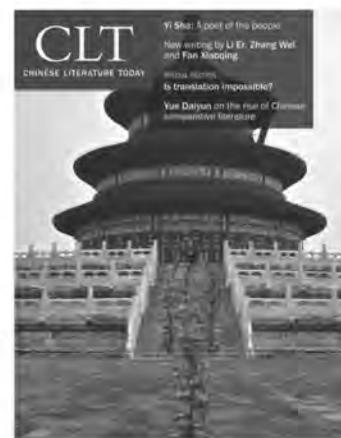
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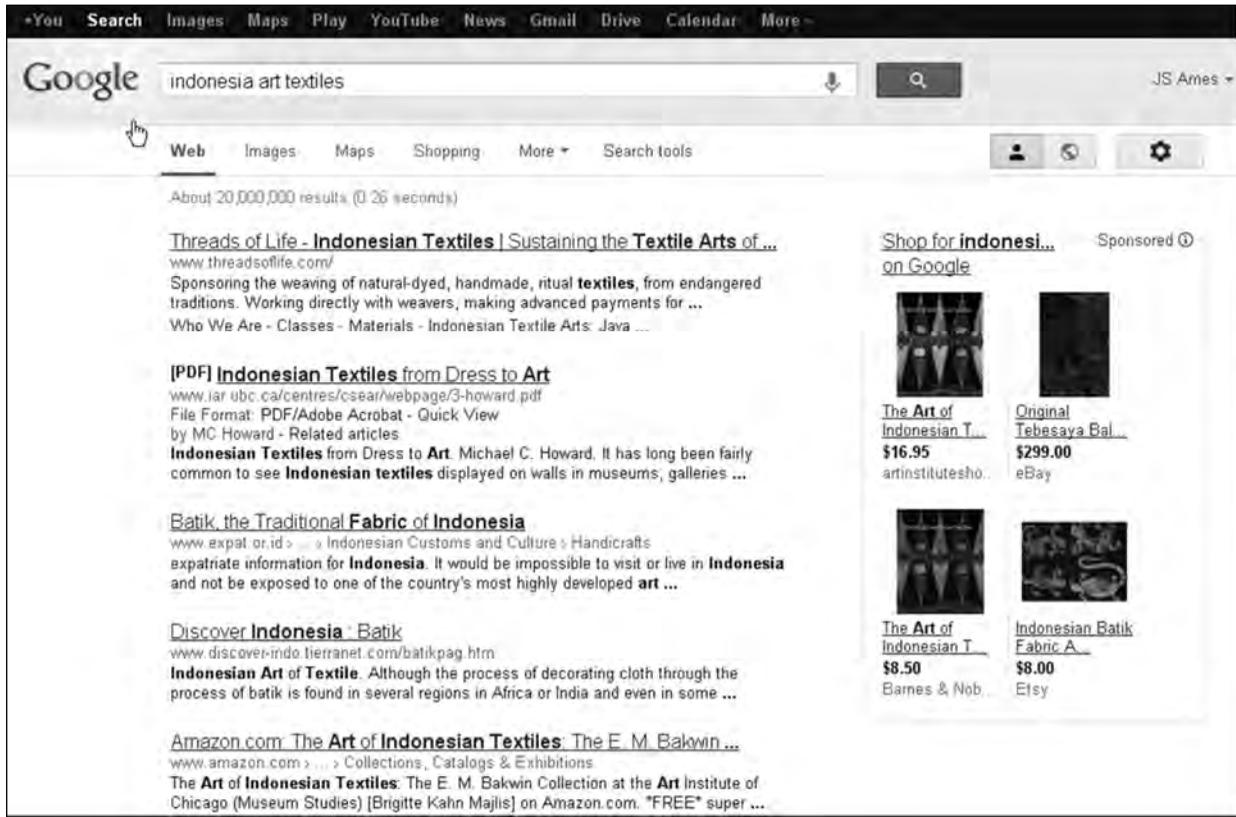


Figure 3: Search with regular Google: Indonesia art textiles.

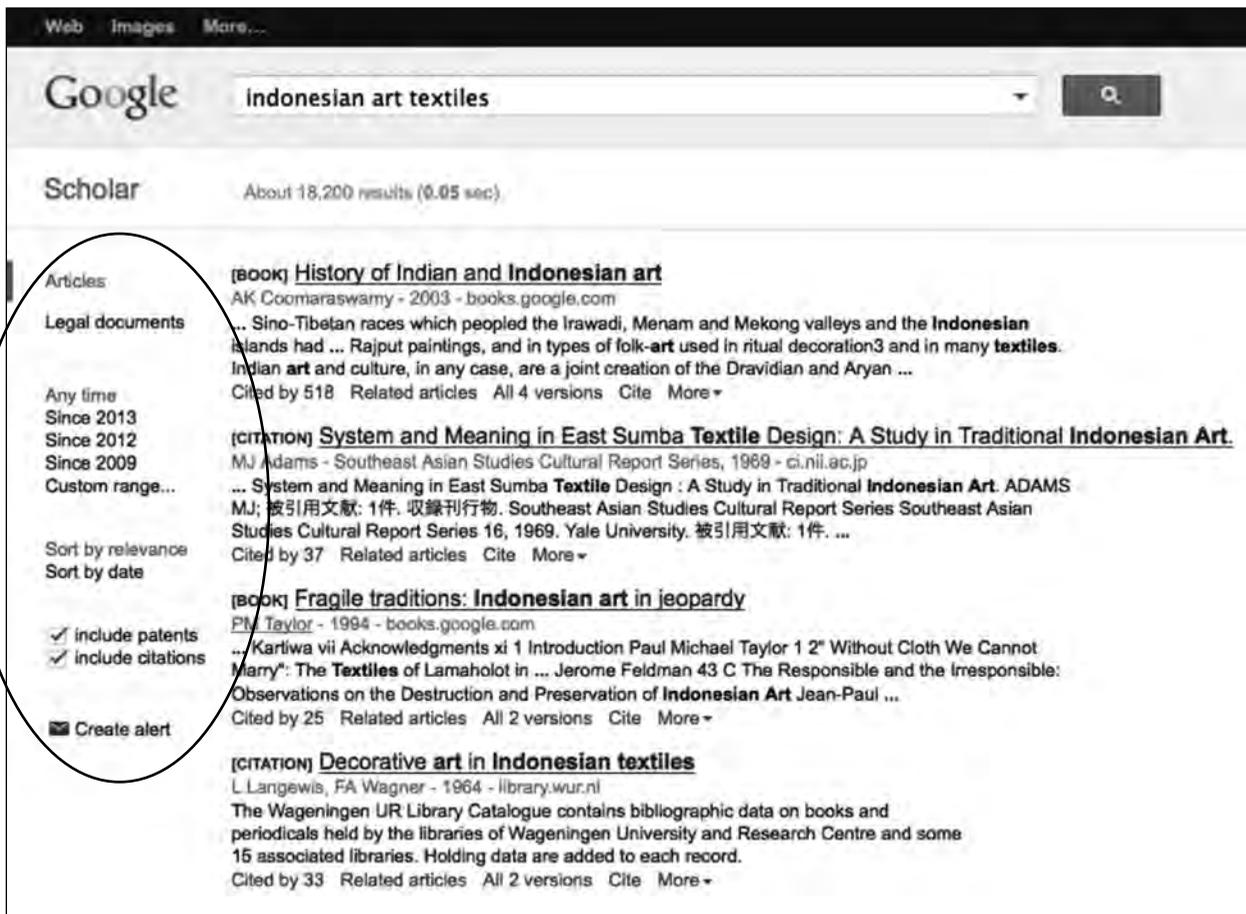


Figure 4: Search with Google Scholar: Indonesia art textiles.

Credibility, reliability, and potential for bias must be considerations when reviewing search results . . .

and opinions; but if the blog author(s) is an expert in a particular field, it can lead to, for instance, the latest news about Chinese ceramics, calendars of events and exhibitions, discussions of new discoveries, or theories or reviews.

Site Credibility and Reliability

Credibility, reliability, and potential for bias must be considerations when reviewing search results, especially when the user does not know the source. First, look for a date to help discern whether it is relevant to your search. The date of the information is important in subjects such as politics and economics, but not as important in history or biography. Is the site from a reputable institution, like a university or an academic journal? Sites ending in .edu or .org are more likely to be credible. Did the author cite other sources, or is the page a product of only the author's opinion without links to other opinions or facts? Before using quotes or "facts" from any source, seek the same information on other sites.

Wikipedia entries are created by potentially unverifiable authors. Although useful as a starting point, information gathered from Wikipedia should be verified by trusted sources, too.

Summary

Here is a step-by-step guide to some of the points made in this article:

1. Plan your search.
2. Conduct serial searches.
3. Use precise and specific search terms.
4. Use operators to narrow results.
5. Quick searches can provide useful information.
6. Use "Search tools" to narrow date, time, and levels of the results.
7. Navigate pages by using CTRL+F with your search term.
8. Use Google Scholar for academic sources.
9. Google Blogs often provide expert resources.
10. Use multiple sources to confirm credibility of information. ■

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