

## Searching Smart Internet Research Tips

The amount of information on the internet is astounding. It can be overwhelming trying to find the exact information you need for your research. When you are researching for school you must also evaluate the quality and verify the source of the information before you use it. These **Searching Smart** tips below can help you become an expert at searching and evaluating information.

To find accurate and specific results, use these Searching Smart tips:

- Choose your search terms, subjects, or **keywords** carefully by considering what questions you are trying to answer when you are doing academic research. Use correct spelling. The search engine will find websites that include these words.
  
- Use **quotation marks** to find an exact phrase, name or title such as:
  - “global warming”
  - “human rights”
  - “Edgar Allan Poe”
  - “The Kite Runner”
  
- Use **Boolean operators AND, OR, NOT** or **word math** symbols (+/-), **plus** and **minus** signs. For example:
  - human **AND** cloning / **+human +cloning** for both terms
  - Microsoft **OR** “Bill Gates” / car **OR** automobile for related terms
  - cardinals **NOT** football / **+cardinals -football** for excluding terms
  
- Always use the **ADVANCED SEARCH** feature! The ALL, SOME or NONE fill-in-the-blank fields automatically search using the helpful tips from above like phrase, Boolean, and word math searching.
  
- To limit results to certain sites- after your search term type:
  - site:edu** for academic or educational
  - site:gov** for governmental sites
  - site:org** for non-profit organizations

For example, if you were researching ancient government and senatorial roots you might do an Advanced Search and type in the box:

- **roman government NOT empire site:edu**
  - This limits your historical timeline and the types of sites.

In another example you might be researching 16<sup>th</sup> century politician, Francis Bacon, and find the painter, Francis Bacon. You want to eliminate the results on the painter so in an Advance Search box try typing:

- **“Francis Bacon” –painter site:edu**
- Use wildcard symbols such as the **asterisk (\*)** in place of a sequence of letters and a **question mark (?)** in place of one character. **For example:**
  - **teen\*** will find **teenage, teenagers, and teens**
  - **\*bird** will find **love-bird, songbird, Thunderbird**
  - **wom?n** will find **woman and women**
  - **s?ng** will find **sing, song, sung**

To evaluate and use your information wisely, here are few **Searching Smart** tips:

- Verify all internet sources to make sure they are legitimate and academically trusted before you use information from them in a research paper.
- Is the website or author well-known and respected?
- Who is the author? Is there information about the author? Is there a contact page?
- Is there bias or strong opinions?
- When was the information created and updated?
- Is it a paid or unpaid site? Did the site pay a fee to be featured at the top of the page?
- Stick to sites that end with **.org, .net, .edu, .gov** and avoid **.com's**. Generally, a **.com** is a commercial site that paid to be near the top of the page to make more money.

- Try a 4 in 1 search engine like [DOGPILE.COM](http://dogpile.com) that searches *Google*, *MSN*, *Yahoo*, and *Ask* all at once.
  - Use subscription databases whenever possible like **Galenet**, **SIRS**, or **EBSCO**.
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Here are some examples of websites found on the internet that are NOT reliable, NOT trustworthy, and NOT appropriate for school research. ALWAYS look for the author of the site!

This website on Martin Luther King, Jr. looks legit, right? But read carefully and you can see this author has an **extreme bias alternative agenda** or for posting this information. <http://www.martinlutherking.org/>

Check out this site that was found searching for information on **extinction** and **extinct animals**: <http://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/>.

These sites were found while searching the internet for **environmental** issues:  
<http://www.buydehydratedwater.com/>  
<http://home.inreach.com/kumbach//velcro.html>.

And this site was found searching for information on **animal abuse**:  
<http://www.thedogisland.com/>

**These sites all look authentic and valid. But look closely and you might be surprised at what you find. You wouldn't want these sources in your Works Cited page, would you?**

Good luck and remember to **Search Smart** to save time and get better results!