

Google Search Tips

Choosing search terms

Choosing the right search terms is the key to finding the information you need.

Start with the obvious – if you're looking for general information on Hawaii, try **Hawaii**.

But it's often advisable to use multiple search terms; if you're planning a Hawaiian vacation, you'll do better with **vacation Hawaii** than with either **vacation** or **Hawaii** by themselves. And **vacation Hawaii golf** may produce even better (or, depending on your perspective, worse) results.

vacation Hawaii golf	Google Search
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You might also ask yourself if your search terms are sufficiently specific. It's better to search on luxury hotels Maui than on tropical island hotels. But choose your search terms carefully; Google looks for the search terms you chose, so luxury hotels Maui will probably deliver better results than really nice places to spend the night in Maui.

Capitalization

Google searches are **NOT** case sensitive. All letters, regardless of how you type them, will be understood as lower case. For example, searches for **george washington**, **George Washington**, and **gEoRgE wAsHiNgToN** will all return the same results.

Automatic "and" queries

By default, Google only returns pages that include all of your search terms. There is no need to include "and" between terms. Keep in mind that the order in which the terms are typed will affect the search results. To restrict a search further, just include more terms. For example, to plan a vacation to Hawaii, simply type **vacation hawaii**.

vacation hawaii	Google Search
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Optional and automatically excluded words

Very common words (often called "stopwords"), such as "the," "and," or "of," are usually dropped from searches because they typically don't convey much information compared to the other words in a search. We might also treat words as optional if they're redundant given the other words in your search. For example, in **UV sun protective swimwear**, requiring "UV" to appear might exclude high quality pages, so we may exclude "UV" in compiling your results.

Even when words are treated as optional, they're still taken into account in assessing how relevant a page is to your query. For example, Google shows different results for **University of Pennsylvania** than we do for **University in Pennsylvania**.

However, if one of these words is important to your search, you can precede it with a plus sign "+" to ensure that Google requires it to appear in every search result. For example, a search for **+The Red Violin** will return only results that include the word "the."

Alternate words

Google usually returns pages that use all of the words you included in your search. Sometimes, however, we'll consider other words as substitutes if we think that doing so will improve the results we show you. For example, if you search for **dance marathons**, Google's results might include pages that talk about a **dance marathon**. On the result pages, we'll highlight occurrences of both the original and alternate search terms that appear in titles and snippets.

There are several ways Google identifies alternate words:

- **Stemming** finds alternate forms of a word, such as singular or plural variations.
- **Synonyms** can help someone searching for **UC Berkeley law school** find pages that mention **Boalt law school**.
- **Abbreviations** expand search terms so that **rc model airplanes** might also find pages about **radio control model airplanes**.
- Words might be **combined or split** so that we return pages about **organic dog food** when you enter **organic dogfood**.
- Because it's often easier to type words without accents, a search for a **coup d'etat** might return pages that talk about a **coup d'état**.

In cases where you want to restrict your search to precisely the terms you enter you can precede a word with a plus sign "+" to tell Google you're looking for that exact term. So, for example, if you search for **dance +marathons**, we'll only return pages that are talking about more than one.

Phrase searches

Sometimes you'll only want results that include an exact phrase. In this case, simply put quotation marks around your search terms:

"the long and winding road"	Google Search
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Phrase searches are particularly effective if you're searching for proper names "**George Washington**", lyrics "**the long and winding road**", or other famous phrases "**This was their finest hour**".

Negative terms

If your search term has more than one meaning (**bass**, for example, could refer to fishing or music) you can focus your search by putting a minus sign ("-") in front of words related to the meaning you want to avoid. For example, here's how you'd find pages about bass-heavy lakes, but not bass-heavy music:

bass -music	Google Search
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*Note: when you include a negative term in your search, be sure to include a space before the minus sign.