

Searching the Web

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Teachers Using the Internet for Education-related Web Searches

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Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer are programs for navigating and viewing sites on the Web - a browser. There are other programs that are tools to help you locate information on the Web - a search engine. The search engine does its job by searching through a database of Web pages to make matches for keyword(s) that you enter. Clicking on the browser Search button will give you a preset search engine. There are dozens of general purpose search engines as well as meta-search tools that search several different search engines and give you a combined or sequential results list.

Experienced users recommend that new users pick one search engine and get very familiar with the procedures and entry rules of this tool, then begin to work with a second search engine. Work primarily with these two while you next begin to compare differences between these and the others. Look for how the search engine finds sites, the rationale for the order in which results are listed, how paid inclusion or sponsored sites are handled in the results, currency of search engine upkeep, and pertinence to education. Features are continually changing, so comparison will need to be regular and ongoing to assure that you're using the most efficient and effective tool for your purpose.

Although popularity of search engines can be measured in different ways, analysts show those currently most used by the general public are:

- **<http://www.google.com/>**

Google.

In addition to entering search terms to search the World Wide Web, Google provides services allowing you to limit your search within a directory, images, news stories, discussion groups, products, professional/scholarly documents, or others. To learn more about these and other features, visit *Google Help Center* at <http://www.google.com/support>.

- **<http://www.yahoo.com>**

Yahoo!

In addition to entering search terms to search the World Wide Web, Yahoo! allows you to limit your search in various ways including within images, audio, news stories, products, or the Yahoo Directory. Yahoo began as a directory type search tool and provides for searching the directory by keyword or by clicking through a topic hierarchy. To learn more about these and other features, visit *Yahoo Help Central* at <http://help.yahoo.com/>.

- **<http://search.msn.com/>**

MSN Search.

Microsoft-owned search sites are being replaced by MSN Search. In addition to entering search terms to search the Web, MSN Search allows you to limit your search within images or news stories. To learn more about these and other features, visit *About us and our search tools* by clicking the Help link.

- **<http://www.ask.com/>**

Ask Jeeves.

Ask Jeeves is noted for being more tolerant to entering natural language questions to search the World Wide Web, Ask Jeeves allows you to limit your search within images, news stories, or products. To learn more about these and other features, visit *Smart Search* by clicking the More link.

Meta search engines apply your search query to multiple search engines and return combined results. Differences between meta search engines are in the individual search engines examined, in the technique for combining the results, and in the style of presenting results lists.

- **<http://www.dogpile.com>**

Dogpile.

Dogpile has been at or near the top in ratings of meta search engines for the last few years. Dogpile searches the most popular search engines. You choose to view results by search engine or relevance (no duplicates). Your search can be limited within images, audio, video, or news stories.

- **<http://clusty.com/>**

Clusty is a newer meta search engine (launched fall 2004). Results are presented as a standard list and categorized into folder topics (clusters). You can limit your search within types of content including images, news stories, products, or encyclopedia. To learn more about how to use Clusty, click on *Help* and/or *Take the Tour*.

Search engines handle keywords differently. It will be time well spent to use any helps available with a search engine and to study search strategies. Poor search strategies are counterproductive as a team of teachers from Anonymous School in Anywhere, Iowa discovered. They surveyed the Internet for sites with curriculum activities and lesson plans that they could use in developing an interdisciplinary unit on Money. This is their summary.

Each member of our four person team began to click our way through the Internet. We discovered several interesting activities to go with our topic among the hundreds of unsuitable websites. We printed activities which would fit, as well as writing down URLs to sites we wanted to return to later. We were glad we did, because some of the sites we used one day were gone the next. The Internet information we received was valuable, but getting it was time consuming, and sometimes frustrating. Problems we faced were numerous. Time was a major factor. We found it was easy to spend three hours searching before finding one or two useful pages. With four of us searching, it would have seemed that we would have found four times the information, but we found that many searches ended in the same result. Many activities weren't suited to our age level of kids. Of those which were, some were inaccurate, incomplete, or inconsistent with our curriculum goals.

Using the internet as a resource or search tool can be of great help to you in your curriculum. Teachers do web searches to access information that would ordinarily not be available to students in their library or classroom. Maximize the positive returns you get from your time spent using the internet for searches by exploring the search techniques given at these sites.

- **<http://www.noodletools.com/debbie/literacies/information/5locate/adviceengine.html>**

Choose the Best Search for Your Information Need.

Chart describes possible information needs and suggests appropriate search strategies. Can be printed for reference. Don't miss the link just under the title to a tutorial on using search tools for current events. Updated January 2006.

- **<http://webquest.sdsu.edu/searching/fournets.htm>**

Four NETS For Better Searching. Techniques to improve your search strategy, with specific examples to try. Examples are based on Google, but techniques are general and not search engine dependent. A WebQuest Training Guide. Updated June 2005.

- **<http://www.pandia.com/goalgetter/index.html>**

Search Engine Tutorial. Per and Susanne Koch wrote this Guide to help you locate what you want on the Internet more efficiently. The tutorial covers selecting the right kind of search tool and constructing the search query. Updated December 2005..

- **<http://www.internet4classrooms.com/search.htm>**

Searching the Internet.

How to search for internet resources to use in a lesson. Step-by-step guided activities with lots of links. Updated December 2005.

Along with developing search skills to locate topical sites efficiently, teachers need to develop evaluation skills to determine the appropriateness of sites to their instruction.

- **<http://www.ala.org/ala/alsc/greatwebsites/greatwebsitesforkids/greatwebsites.htm>**
Great Web Sites For Kids Selection Criteria.
Criteria used by the American Library Association for selecting appropriate sites for k-7 students. Four categories: authorship, purpose, design, content.
- **<http://www.schrockguide.org/abceval/index.htm>**
Kathy Schrock's ABC's of Web Site Evaluation.
Guided study of the factors to consider when evaluating a Web site. Links to an evaluation survey for student use (one elementary and one middle school), and additional articles, updated January 2005.