

Advanced Searches

Making the Most of Any Search Engine You Use

A “search engine” can be used to **find information**. To *search* a search engine, you normally click or tap on a **search box** and type one or more words (ideas, names, places, etc.) describing what you want to research:

Search: (advanced) ←

(Tip: an “advanced” search option, if one is available, usually gives you **better control** over your search.)

There are *many* different kinds of search engines, including **library catalogs**, **databases**, online **stores**, and **websites** such as **Bing.com**, **Google.com**, and **Yahoo.com**. Each search engine produces **different results**.

Bing, **Google**, and **Yahoo** are three popular **general search engines** which can be useful if you are not yet aware of better options. General search engines can produce *millions* of results, many of them irrelevant!

Thankfully, there are *many* other **specific** search engines you can use. For example, **MedlinePlus.gov** can be used to locate **health** information, while **NASA.gov** can help you locate information on current and past **space missions**.

Some advanced techniques to consider...

To **find words in a specific order**, try putting “quotation marks” around the words. That sequence of words is considered a **phrase** (e.g. “**Bill of Rights**”). Most major search engines support phrase searches.

Certain words (known as “**stop words**”) are often **ignored** by some search engines. Words such as “**and**” and “**the**” and “**this**” can usually be **omitted** from your search terms – unless they are *part of a phrase search*.

In Google, **quotation marks** tell that search engine you want to include **each word or phrase you quote** in the results. In the *past*, Google required a plus (+) symbols before words or phrases to indicate they must be included.

Some search engines support **advanced search commands**. For example, at **Bing** and **Google** you can search for words and phrases in the titles of Web pages by using the special **intitle:** command (e.g. **intitle:“Bill of Rights”**).

Bing and **Google** also support both the **site:** and **inurl:** search commands. You can use **site:** to **limit search results** to certain websites (**.gov** for government websites, **.org** for organizations, **.edu** for universities), as in this advanced phrase search: “**Bill of Rights**” **site:.gov**

The **inurl:** command tells the search engine to **search within URLs** (Web addresses), as in **inurl:NASA**.

Google also supports the **intitle:** search command. You can use **intitle:** to **search for websites whose titles contain words or phrases** you specify, as in **intitle:“Library Catalog”**

Some search engines let you tell them **what you do not want to see** in search results. To do this, place a **minus symbol (-) symbol before unwanted words or phrases**. This can result in fewer yet possibly *more relevant* search results.

Some search engines (including many of our **full-text article databases** at **www.thrall.org/databases**), also offer a “**search within these results**” option, allowing you to apply *new* keywords to an existing set of search results.

See if a search engine offers a more specific **search mode**. For example, Bing, Google, and Yahoo offer **image**, **video**, and **news search** modes you can select. Even our library catalog offers a **video search** mode: **thrall.org/videos**

A few search engines offer customizable **Preferences** or **Settings** options you can use to tailor results based on language, content, and other criteria. If you don’t see a link for “preferences” or “settings,” look for a **tiny gear** button.

Try multiple search engines and **compare their results**. You can do this easily through Thrall’s home page (**www.thrall.org**) by clicking our “**Web Search**” link. You can also go to **thrall.org/search** and **search by topic!**

“**Metasearches**” such as **Dogpile.com** can send your searches to several engines and produce a combined list of results.

Browsing can be *better* than searching. Discover new sources, learn new terms and topics, and *have fun exploring!* Try it by going to **thrall.org/guides** or to **thrall.org/readyref**. If you’re a member of our library, also try **thrall.org/databases**

Remember: *any information you need might not be online*. Our librarians can help you! Please visit our **Reference Department**, or call **341-5461** for research assistance. You can also **ask us a question online** at **www.thrall.org/ask**