

Using Google Search

It would now be difficult to think of how we would find information without Google, we use it so much in our everyday lives. At college, finding the right information is often critical to passing your course and, therefore, developing good search techniques is invaluable. This guide will provide you with information on what you need to think about before using google and then tips on how to get the best from your search results.

Things to think about before using Google:

- Quality and accuracy of information. Remember that google gives both good and bad information and generally ranks results by popularity rather than accuracy,
- Your search returns too many results and it's difficult to filter out what is relevant
- Your information evaluation criteria: Who, where What When etc it's important to keep a critical open mind when searching for information.

Alternative Sources of Information:

Library resources

All the resources in the library have been bought to support what is being taught in the college. A lot of the books have been recommended by your lecturer and therefore suitable for your course. Using the books can often save you a lot of time and effort in searching for the right information on the internet. A lot of the concerns over the accuracy and validity of the information is taken care of

Online Databases

Online specialised databases that the college may subscribe to, to support your course work. It's worthwhile becoming familiar with what is available and how to access it. It could save you a lot of time and effort in completing your assignments.

Developing a Search Strategy

It's important to really think about what you have been asked to do, and think about the key words you need to use to get the best search results you can. This is called a search strategy. Some people use [mind maps or spidergraphs](#) to help with this process, for others just a simple list will do.

Use your search strategy to search for information and systematically, keep a note or add relevant websites to your favourites in an organised way. It's worthwhile opening a word document and copying a pasting urls for relevant websites straight onto a word document. This can also form the basis of any reference list or bibliography you may create and hand in as part of your completed piece of work.

EG.,

You've been asked to find out about the function of bones in the human body

Here are suggested keywords:

Human body, human anatomy, skeletal system, bones skeleton

Tips for Searching

You will have identified a number of keywords and phrases from you planning and have your search strategy in place. Despite this, it's amazing how many Web pages are returned when performing a search. Below are a few tips from Google on how you can maybe reduce the number of pages returned:

Phrase Searching

One of the more powerful tools on the web is "phrase searching" just put the exact phrase you are looking for in double quotation marks " " and google will show results that include your phase eg:

"human anatomy" to narrow down your results even further you can combine this with other key words or phases eg: " Human anatomy " "Skeletal system"

Synonyms

Synonym: a word that means same or similar to another word

During your planning you will probably identified different key words or phrases for searching for information. Eg Nutrition, healthy eating diet Google can also help in this process and often does it automatically:

Wildcard character:

A **wildcard character** is a keyboard **character** such as an asterisk (*) or a question mark (?) that is used to represent one or more **characters** when you are searching for information. For example searching run* will return results for running, runner, runs, any other words additional to the letters

you have typed. In other words, any word that starts with run and has any kind of ending The ? will only provide one letter after what you have typed. In this example runs

Narrow your search

Use the minus operator (-) Equivalent to a Boolean NOT How many times have you searched for a term that returned totally unexpected results For example, looking for information on the insect Caterpillar and references to the company Caterpillar, Inc. will also be returned. Using **caterpillar -inc** will exclude most of the references to the company.

Related site:

You can find webpages that are similar to other webpages by using **related** in your search

For example to find organisations similar to the BBC search related: www.bbc.co.uk Similar to Youtube Related: www.youtube.com