## Search engine cheat sheet

Detailed features of four recommended search engines.

Vincent BUCK.  
Published: December 19, 2000  
Last updated: December 2, 2015

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### Help File

- **Google Advanced search tips**
- **Interpreting Results in Google**
- **Berkeley tutorials**
  - [detailed searching instructions for Google](http://www.google.com)
  - [detailed searching instructions for Alta Vista Advanced Search](http://www.altavista.com/cgi-bin/query?pg=aq&stype=stext)
  - [detailed searching instructions for Northern Light Power](http://www.northernlight.com/power.html)
  - [detailed searching instructions for Fast Search Advanced](http://www.alltheweb.com/cgi-bin/advsearch)

### Phrase searching

- **Yes.** Use simple quotes ("search phrase")
- **In advanced search, choose "find results with the exact phrase".**

### Boolean logic

- **Tip! Always capitalise Boolean operators**
- **Limited Boolean logic is available:**
  - "OR" is supported (contrary to what most tutorials say)
  - "AND" is automatically assumed between words, thereby restricting your search
- **Exclude words by prefixing them with the - sign [-term]**
- **In Advanced Search, Boolean logic is available in the form of:**
  - **ALL** is "AND"
  - **Available, but only in the "Boolean query" box of the Advanced Search page.**
    - Supported operators include AND (assumed by default), OR, AND NOT, NEAR (within 10 words).
    - Nesting is supported.

- **In the top box, AND is assumed by default.**
- **For OR, enclose terms or phrases in parentheses; e.g.**
  - (interpreter translator)
- **Advanced search "filter" boxes approximates Boolean logic:**
  - **Must include** is "AND"
  - **Must not include** is "NOT"
  - **Should include** ensures higher ranking
ANY is "OR"
WITHOUT is "AND"
NOT"

Nesting is not supported.

Requires/ Excludes
Search terms without a specific require or exclude instruction default to "AND".

Note that Google automatically ignores very frequent words, i.e. articles, prepositions from your search terms. To leave them in, prefix them with a + sign, e.g.:

"shakespeare +in love"
retrieves URLs on all three words whereas
"shakespeare in love" disregards the "in".

However, not all common words can be forced back into a query using the + sign. For instance, Google is totally defeated by the search phrase: "to be or not to be".

Sub-Searching
No.
Refine your search by adding terms to your original search.

Results Ranking
Based on a special algorithm for page popularity measured in links to it from other pages, Google is probably the best engine at relevancy ranking. Google is very good at giving a ranking to official sites (to which other sites link a lot)

Unless terms are preceded by a + sign, "fuzzy AND" is invoked.

Note that matching and ranking in Google are based on the "cached" version of pages that may not be the most recent

Available only in Simple Search
(which defaults to OR).
[+term] requires that the term be present.
[-term] excludes all pages where the term is present

A better option is to use Boolean logic in Advanced Search.

Search terms without a specific require or exclude instruction default to AND.
[+term] requires that the term be present.
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In the top search box:
[+term] requires that the term be present/
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Search terms without a specific require or exclude instruction default to AND.
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No.
Add terms to refine your search or use Northern Light's very intuitive "Folders" to drill down on a sub-theme.

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Unless terms are preceded by a + sign, "fuzzy AND" is invoked.

You can request results to be sorted by reverse date.

Automatic "fuzzy AND".
Weights results by search term sequence, left to right.
Also considers the number of links to each page, somewhat like Google.

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version.

**Field filtering**

- **title:**
- **url:**
- **link:**
- **host:**
- **domain:**
- **anchor:**
- **text:**
- **image:**
- **applet:**

Advanced Search lets you search within:
- **text:**
- **title:**
- **url:**
- **link name:**
- **url:**
- **link to the url:**

**Truncation**

No, and no stemming.

- Use * wildcard for any ending.
- * wildcard may be used for any characters within a word; at least 4 other characters must precede it.
- No.
- Enclose variants in ( ) in top box to create OR.

This means you must search plurals separately!

- Use % wildcard to allow only one character variable in a word.
- Also stems allowing most plurals and common endings.

**Case sensitivity**

- Yes. Upper case retrieves only matching upper case.
- No.
- Lower case retrieves either lower or upper case.
- No.
- No.
- Alta Vista is also accent and character sensitive.

**Language filtering**

- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.

**Limit by age of documents**

- In Advanced Search.
- In Advanced search.
- Yes, in Power Search
- In Advanced Search.

Adapted from the Berkeley University Teaching Library Internet Workshops - [Recommended Search Engines Detailed Features Table](https://aiic.net/p/302).

**Recommended citation format:**