

Name: _____

Section: _____

Website Considerations and Search Engine Tools

When collecting information or research there are a variety of ways to find what you are looking for. The resources (books, journals, magazines, etc.) located in the library/media center were historically the primary source of information.

Nowadays, the internet allows us to access many of these same resources, but more conveniently. However, there are a few things to consider as you search for and access information. Prior to performing a general search using a search engine you should use a reputable database such as WebPath Express, Facts on File, or EBSCO host. These databases are filled with information on a variety of topics and you can feel confident about the information since people review and confirm its accuracy.



Performing a general internet search is another option, but can be a challenging task for a variety of reasons. One common issue is the vast number of websites available, many of which may contain information that is not objective or reliable. Another issue is the overwhelming number of search results one receives when using a search engine. This reference sheet will help provide you with an overview of general website considerations and a few tools (on the reverse side of this paper) for optimizing your internet searches.



General Website Considerations

- Determine if the website you are viewing is an individual's personal site or if it is the site for a larger organization. It is recommended that you access and use the websites of well known, reputable, organizations. These websites are likely to be reliable sources of information. Although personal websites can be worthwhile and may contain a lot of useful information, use caution because they can also be filled with information that is not objective. Percent signs (%) and tildes (~) are a few symbols usually associated with personal sites.
- Be careful because there are websites that may look credible or have a web address/name that sounds credible; however, some websites are purposely designed to mislead you in order to pass along information that is inappropriate or incorrect.
- Confirm that the information from the chosen website is correct by cross-referencing it with at least two other websites.



Using Search Engines Tools

When using search engines, try to carefully select keywords and incorporate the symbols/commands below to help narrow the search results. This will lessen the number of websites a search engine may return and help you efficiently locate the information you need. Using the tools below in search engines is a skill that improves with practice.

Symbols/Commands	Function	Example
+	The "plus" symbol tells the search engine to find websites that have all of the terms you entered	dogs +breeds <i>will only find websites with the words "dogs" and "breeds"</i>
-	The "minus" symbol tells the search engine to find websites that have one term in them, but not another	birds -vultures <i>Will only find websites with the word "birds" but not "vultures"</i>
" "	Quotation marks tell the search engine to find websites that have the terms in a specific order	"Bernese Mountain Dog" <i>will only find websites with the words "Bernese Mountain Dog" in this order</i>
site:  (Use with <u>Google</u> search engine)	The "site:" command tells the search engine to narrow down the results to a specific category of websites. For example, if you wanted to only search government websites you would use the "gov" extension with the "site:" command. Some common extensions are .com, .edu, .org, and .ac among others. A complete list of extensions can be found by searching "url extensions" in a search engine. Additionally, a category of websites could be narrowed down by using a country code. Country codes can be found by searching "url country codes" in your search engine.	<u>Extension</u> site:gov + "chicken pox" <i>will only find government websites with information on "chicken pox"</i> <u>Country Code</u> site:ca + "chicken pox" <i>will only find websites from Canada with information on "chicken pox"</i>
host:  (Use with <u>AltaVista</u> search engine)	The "host:" command tells the search engine to narrow down the results to a specific category of websites. For example, if you wanted to only search government websites you would use the "gov" extension with the "site:" command. Some common extensions are .com, .edu, .org, and .ac among others. A complete list of extensions can be found by searching "url extensions" in a search engine. Additionally, a category of websites could be narrowed down by using a country code. Country codes can be found by searching "url country codes" in your search engine.	<u>Extension</u> host:gov + "chicken pox" <i>will only find government websites with information on "chicken pox"</i> <u>Country Code</u> host:ca + "chicken pox" <i>will only find websites from Canada with information on "chicken pox"</i>