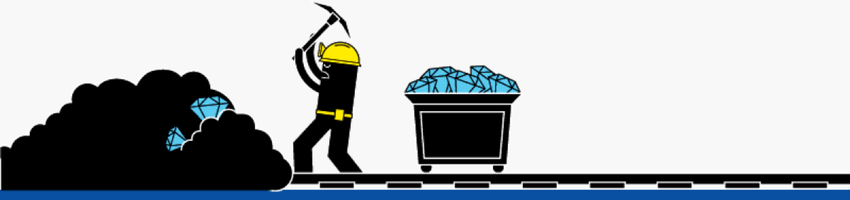
Get More Out of Google

Tips & Tricks for Students Conducting Online Research

There is a lot more to efficient Googling than you might think: in a recent study on student research skills, **3 out of 4 students** couldn't perform a 'well-executed search' on Google. When the success of your term paper hangs in the balance, using Google effectively is crucial, but most students surprisingly **just don't know how**.

Here are some crucial tips for **refining your Googling**, as well as some other great places to hunt down that last study you need for your thesis.



How to Google

Search terms called **‘operators’** can help you get far more specific results than you would by only using generic search terms. Here are some of the most useful.

What You Want

NYTimes **articles** about test scores in college, but not the SATs, written between 2008 and 2010.

How To Google It

site:
Only searches the pages of that site.

“ ”
Searches for the exact phrase, not each of the words separately.

-
Excludes this term from the search.

site:nytimes.com ~college “test scores” -SATs 2008..2010

~
Will also search related words, such as ‘higher education’ and ‘university’.

..
Shows all results from within the designated timerange.

What You Want

A **report** on the different air speed velocities of common swallows.

How To Google It

Don't ask Google questions. Think about how an answer would be phrased, and search for that (ie, never search for 'What is the air speed velocity...').

filetype:
Searches only results of the file type you designate. Can use for pdf, doc, jpg, etc.

intitle:
Only shows results with that word in the title (in this case, 'velocity').

filetype:pdf air speed intitle:velocity of *swallow

*****
Replaces itself with common terms in your search (in this case, Red Rumped swallow and Lesser Striped swallow will both be searched, along with many others).

Google Scholar

For most projects you work on in college, simple Googling won't do the trick on its own. Enter Google Scholar, which exclusively searches **academic and scholarly work** - that is, the kind of work you'll need to be citing in your papers.

What You Want

Papers about photosynthesis by Dr. Ronald L. Green and Dr. Thomas P. Buttz.

How To Google It

author:
This will search for papers by Green rather than papers involving the word ‘green.”

“ ”
For more specific results, you can put the authors full name or initials in quotes.

author:green photosynthesis “tp buttz”

Just like a normal Google search, this is where the topic you’re looking for goes.

Other Google Tricks

Definitions

Good for quick word definitions. Just put **define:** in front of the word you want.

define:angary

Calculator

For quick math problems, don't worry about opening your calculator app. Just type the equation into Google using +, -, *, / and parentheses for **basic functions**.

(2*3)/5+44-1

Unit Converter

Easiest unit conversion ever. Just type what you're looking for in a sentence with the **units you have and want**.

54 pounds in kilograms

Keyboard Shortcuts

90% of Internet users don't know how to use **Command + F** to find items on a page. If you're one of those 90%, this section is for you.*

*As 70% of students use Macs, we formatted these tips for Mac users, but many of them will work for PCs if you press 'CTRL' instead of 'Command'.

Find On Page

The most important keyboard shortcut for **research**, ever. Press **Command + F** when looking at any document or web page, type in the word you're trying to find, and presto, **all instances** of the word are highlighted for you.

⌘ command + F

Zoom In/Out

Sometimes online PDFs make for strained reading. **Bump up the size** a few notches with this simple command.

⌘ command + + / -

Select The Address Bar

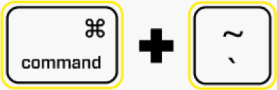
Doing rapid Google searches in a number of tabs can be fatiguing. Instead of mousing up to the address bar every time, just hit **Command + L** and it's already selected.

⌘ command + L

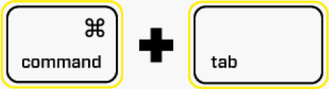
Cycle Windows & Apps

Research on the computer is always plagued by window and app clutter that grows as your work does. Use **Command + ` (the key above tab on the left side)** to cycle through windows in a certain application, or **Command + Tab** to cycle applications.

windows

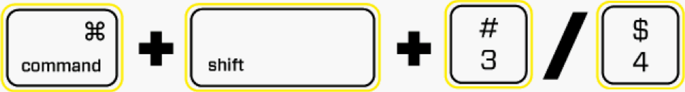


applications



Screenshot

Sometimes, for whatever reason, you might need to capture the state of your screen, or an image from a document. **Command + Shift + 3** screencaps your whole screen. **Command + Shift + 4** lets you draw a box around a specific area of your screen you wish to capture.



Further Research Tips

Use Your Library's Website

Google should never be your only research option. Most colleges' library web pages have links to **wealths of resources** at your disposal. This is where you can find access to scholarly databases such as **JSTOR**, which publish content that you can't access for free elsewhere.

Don't Cite Wikipedia

Let's face it: we all use Wikipedia when conducting research. It's a great first resource to familiarize one's self with a topic, but using Wiki for a research paper is a **deadly academic sin**. But if you find a good wiki, check out the reference links at the bottom for more credible sources.

Mine Bibliographies

This tip is applicable for both **digital and traditional research.** If you find a great book, study, or article, chances are it cites some other great sources. Always thoroughly explore the bibliographies of your research materials for leads, and look up everything you find that seems promising.

HackCollege.com

References

http://library.uvic.ca/instruction/research/google101.html•http://www.dumblittleman.com/2007/06/20-tips-for-more-efficient-google.html•http://scholar.google.ca/intl/en/scholar/refinesearch.html•http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2011/08/crazy90-percent-of-people-dont-know-how-to-use-ctrl-f/243840/•http://www.maclife.com/article/features/10_coolest_keyboard_shortcuts_you_never_knew_about•http://www.womansday.com/Articles/Life/15-Keyboard-Shortcuts-You-Probably-Don-t-Know.html

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