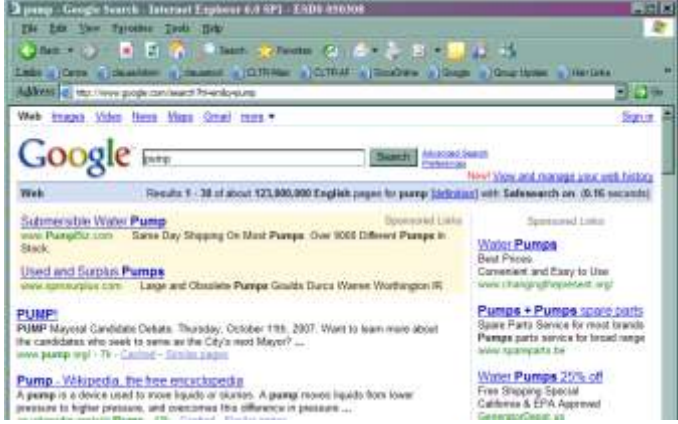





## Better searching in Google September 2009

There is so much information available on the web today that it's becoming hard to find anything. There are literally billions of web pages available on the web today. Fortunately a few simple tricks can narrow the search results. Here are some tricks I use when searching the web using Google.

 <p>A screenshot of an Internet Explorer browser window showing a Google search for the word "pump". The search bar contains "pump" and the search button is highlighted. Below the search bar, the results show "Results 1 - 38 of about 123,000,000 English pages for pump [related] with Safesearch on (0.16 seconds)". Several search results are visible, including "Submersible Water Pump", "Used and Surplus Pumps", and "PUMP!".</p>	<p>I am searching for a centrifugal pump for a fire system.</p> <p>By searching on the word pump I ended up with 123,000,000 pages. Should be something useful in there somewhere – but it would be nice to narrow it down a little.</p> <p>Notice that some of the links refer to a musical song. Since I'm not interested in musical pumps, I can eliminate them easily by adding <i>-music</i> to my search.</p>
 <p>A screenshot of an Internet Explorer browser window showing a Google search for "+pump -music". The search bar contains "+pump -music" and the search button is highlighted. The results show "Web Results 1 - 30 of about 109,000,000 English pages for +pump -music with Safesearch on (0.15)". The top result is "PUMP! PUMP! Mayoral Candidate Debate. Thursday, October 11th, 2007. Want to learn more about the candidates who seek to serve as the City's next Mayor? ...".</p>	<p><i>pump -music</i> returns 109,000,000 pages. Still a few too many, but now I'm moving in the right direction. What other specific reference to pump can I eliminate? Notice now that I am searching more specifically, I have also added + to pump which ensures that pump must appear on the page.</p>
 <p>A screenshot of an Internet Explorer browser window showing a Google search for "+pump -music -shoe -insulin". The search bar contains "+pump -music -shoe -insulin" and the search button is highlighted. The results show "Web Books Results 1 - 30 of about 101,000,000 English pages for +pump -music -shoe -insulin". The top result is "Centrifugal Pump User's Guidebook - by S. Yedidiah - 400 pages".</p>	<p>Here, I've taken out <i>shoe</i> and <i>insulin</i> to reduce my search results even further. But still I have 101 Mil results. Instead of trying to eliminate pages, let's try being more specific about what I want.</p> <p><b>TIP: Use + and – signs to force search results to include or exclude specific words. The more specific you can be the better.</b></p>
 <p>A screenshot of an Internet Explorer browser window showing a Google search for "+pump -music -shoe -insulin +water". The search bar contains "+pump -music -shoe -insulin +water" and the search button is highlighted. The results show "Web Results 1 - 30 of about 58,000,000 English pages for +pump -music -shoe -insulin +water with Safesearch on (0.15)". The top result is "Water Pump" from Northern Tool.</p>	<p>I've added <i>+water</i> and made big difference in the results – now I'm down to only 58 Mil pages to look at. Can I do better? I think so.</p> <p>I'm really only looking for manufacturers or distributors so I could add those words (with + signs) <i>+manufacturer +distributor</i></p>



I can use quotation marks to ask Google to find an exact phrase – in this case + “water pump” Now my results drop in half because Google is searching for pages that contain the exact phrase + “water pump”. Notice I also use the + sign to make sure I get it “water pump” on every page.

**TIP: Use “ ” to designate a specific phrase**



Caution; the web page I’m looking for might not describe the pump as a “water pump” it might say it “pumps water”. So I’ve take out that phrase and replaced it with as many keywords as I can think of. Now the results are including manufacturers and distributors that I am interested in looking at.

**TIP: only use phrases “ “ that you are sure of.**

My results also include pages that are nothing but safety or environmental reports, so I could eliminate them with -report. Make sure there is no space between – and the excluded word.



**TIP – Google has an Advanced Options page.** Display recently updated pages. Try the new “Wonder Wheel” function for refining results.



**TIP: Google has an advanced search page.** Click on Advanced Search to find even more ways to narrow down search results.

## Can I do better? Sure....

1. **TIP: The web sites listed on the right side of the page are paid advertisements. Don't assume they are anything special.**
2. **TIP: avoid plurals.** Unless they are what you really want and are “*part of a phrase*”. If I look for *pump* I also get *pumps*; but if I start with *pumps* I may **not** get *pump*.
3. **TIP: Eliminate common words** such as "a", "my", or "the", unless you're looking for a specific title. If the word is part of something you're looking for (a song title, for example), include the common word and surround the phrase with quotation marks.
4. **TIP: Think about other information that might be listed on the web page you are looking for.** Find vendors in Washington or Oregon state by adding WA and OR (presuming the company address would be displayed on the web page). Notice I did not use the + sign since I wanted either WA or OR.
5. **TIP: Don't forget Google also searches for numbers.** Presuming a telephone number would be posted on the web page; try searching for (509). Add the phone number, zip code or part of the address to your search. Remember if you are using a phone number “373-0413” to place quotation marks around it or else the “-“ sign will subtract. Since phone numbers are written in many formats, I'd try them all. “509.373.0413” or “(509)” for example.

***Important note to buyers: I do NOT trust a vendor who does not include an address, a working phone number and contact information on their web site.***

6. **TIP: Use specific words rather than generic categories.** For example, instead of searching for *dogs*, search for a Golden Retriever dog. For something with a recent date on it I could add +2007
7. **TIP: Google prioritizes results, so search terms in order of importance.** I could take a shot in the dark (and risk missing some important pages) by jumping directly to a full phrase search, “*centrifugal fire system pump*” Then also add some of the other terms individually to pick up extra pages which might not have that exact phrase.
8. **TIP: Google has Advanced Options and Search Pages that will dramatically help improves results.** Get in the habit of using them for important searches. [http://www.google.com/advanced\\_search?hl=en](http://www.google.com/advanced_search?hl=en)
9. **TIP: Google already has some Topic-Specific search templates built.** Such as the search tool which only looks at Government web sites. <http://www.google.com/ig/usgov> You can find the other templates on the Advanced Search page
10. **TIP: Set Google preferences on your computer to control results.** I only want pages in English, definitely want the naughty stuff filtered out (at least at the office) and usually prefer links to open in a new window so I don't have to start the search over. <http://www.google.com/preferences?hl=en>
11. **TIP: Google special search command operators** are also used in many different search tools – on our network, on some web sites, etc. It's worth trying them just to see. Find all the special operators in a concise list here: <http://www.google.com/intl/en/help/cheatsheet.html>
12. Find more Google advanced search tips here: <http://www.google.com/intl/en/help/refinesearch.html>

13. **Bonus Tip: Where the heck is that phone number located?** Try this: <http://phone-lookup.net/>
14. **Extra Credit Reading: How does Google collect and rank results?**  
[http://www.google.com/librariancenter/articles/0512\\_01.html](http://www.google.com/librariancenter/articles/0512_01.html)
15. **Humor; we've earned a reward after reading all this:** Take a look at this theory about how Google works. <http://www.google.com/technology/pigeonrank.html> “OMG who would have guessed!”  
*I'm sure someone sent me this page when it first came out asking if it was really true.*
16. **TIP: Don't be a one-trick pony.** There are many different search engines and they all return slightly different results. Learn about specialized search engines and practice using different search engines.  
[http://www.mltweb.com/tools/PC/Search\\_Engines.pdf](http://www.mltweb.com/tools/PC/Search_Engines.pdf)