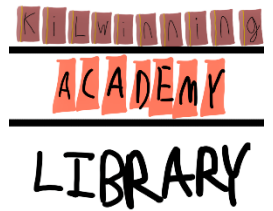# Library Helpsheet

Using Google Effectively

Google is the search engine of choice for many people when searching the internet. However, have you searched for ages and not found what you were looking for? Or had so many results you could never find time to look at them all? Or sometimes you spend so much time researching that you have so little time to write your essay or complete your project?

So, what can you do to get more relevant, accurate results more quickly? Here are a few tips to better searching using Google:

Keywords

- Make a mind map beforehand to generate lots of **keywords** or a list of topics so that you don't need to waste time thinking about what search terms to use
- Google places more emphasis on the first words you type in, so think about the order of the keywords
- Google automatically inserts '**and**' between your keywords so don't waste time typing 'and'

Punctuation

- Use "**quotation marks**" so that that Google will look for the **exact phrase** you are looking for e.g. "Scottish football" is the phrase; but Scottish football will return results where Scottish **and** football appear on the one page
- Use the **minus sign** (-) to exclude a keyword from your search e.g. football –Scottish to exclude Scottish football
- Use the **number range operator ..** (2 full stops between two numbers) to search for keywords with a numerical range. This can be currency, dates, weights or distances e.g. world war 1939..1945
- Use @ in front of a word to search social media e.g. @twitter

Remember – don't leave a space between the search term and punctuation

Refining searches using search operators

- Use **site:** to limit searches to specific groups of people e.g. **site:ac** limits the search to educational institutions; **site:.uk** limits the search to UK based sites; and **site:org** limits the search to organisations; or to a specific website e.g. **site:bbc.co.uk**
- Use **related:** to find sites similar to a URL you already know e.g. **related:time.com** will find information in other magazine/newspaper sites similar to Time's website

Remember – don't leave a space between the search operator and your search term.

Search tools

When searching, the default, is to present all results i.e. images, websites, news etc. Use search tools to refine your results:

- Select images, or news, or videos by **tab** to see only images etc.
- Select **tools** to then refine your results by date, colour, blog, source, quality etc. depending on which tool you are using.

Advanced search

The advanced search is available at http://www.google.com/advanced_search

This means you can limit your search by:

- **Language** – find pages in the language you want e.g. French
- **Region** – restrict your results to pages located in a specific region e.g. UK
- **Last updated** – only find pages in a specific time period e.g. past month
- **Site or domain** – limits results to a specific type of website e.g. education, organisations, company; or to a specific website e.g. BBC
- **Terms appearing** – specify where your search term appears – anywhere, on the title page, in the text on the page, URL, or on the links page
- **Safe search** – excludes sexual content
- **File type** – specify the type of page or file you would like e.g. Word document, PDF, PowerPoint, Google Earth etc.
- **Usable rights** – search for information which is free to share, or free to modify

Now you have the tools to perform good searches, have a go and see the difference it makes to the time you spend searching.

Remember, if you spend less time searching you will have more time to write your essays or projects and hopefully that will make for a better result!

Remember – when using the internet, it is for your class work and research. If the results you get are not relevant with a simple search, then use a different search term, or refine your search with tips on this help sheet.

Warning! Anyone can publish on the internet, so **evaluate** all information before using it.

Remember RAT for evaluating all sources of information:

R Relevant – what I need
A Accurate – what I expected and find the same information in other sites
T Trust – is the source reliable, unbiased, fact or opinion

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