

# 11 expert tips to search Google better, faster, more strategically

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Searching on Google has become second nature for billions of people. In fact, Googling is so entrenched in our culture, it's become the generic word for looking things up online. Yet even though you long ago mastered the essentials, there's still a lot most of us can learn about how

to search faster and more effectively.

Senior Google research scientist Daniel M. Russell recently published "The Joy of Search: A Google Insider's Guide Going Beyond The Basics." U.S. TODAY caught up with Russell in New York where he was teaching a "Grow With Google" class on search strategies.

Here are some of his key tips:

## **1. Think an extra second about what you are really asking for**

Consider the following search query: "When did Santa Clara (the city) begin?" Simple enough, right?

But depending on how you ask the question, the date that comes up in search results will vary considerably: You might see when Santa Clara was "founded." Or when it was instead, "incorporated," "established" or "first set up as a city government." Which answer do you want?

Now take another search example from Russell. "What is the distance to the sun?"

Again, seems simple. But where are you measuring from? The center of the Earth to the sun? From another planet to the sun? And so on. Think about the precise thing you are looking for in entering the search, keeping in mind that you can always try again. It doesn't cost a thing to do a second search on a complex topic.

## **2. Don't include your answer in a search**

People sometimes bake the expected answer in their search query. So it's

better to ask, "What is the average length of an octopus" rather than "Is the average length of an octopus 21 inches?" Why? You may, indeed, see search results "confirming" 21 inches? But is that really the correct answer? Maybe other sources got it wrong. "You're leading the witness," when you include the answer in a search query, Russell says, thus biasing the results.

In just the same way, you wouldn't ask, "Were Cuban spies on the grassy knoll during JFK's assassination." You will find many web pages where that very notion was brought up. But unless you're doing research on conspiracy theories around the assassination, you are likely again getting results that are biased or false.

### **3. Use "context" search terms**

You want to help the kids with homework but have forgotten all your high school math. You could search for "quadratic equation" and find lots of results. But if you add the context search term "tutorial" as in "quadratic equation tutorial" you may get to more useful results faster.

There are numerous "context" terms that will help you better pinpoint a search, including words such as "lesson," "background," "summary," "define," or "history."

In general, Google's advice is to add or remove words in your query to see different results, starting out with a broad search and narrowing it down as you go.

### **4. Search by voice for a spelling**

Do you know how to spell "hors d'oeuvres" or "pneumonia"? If you didn't know that those spellings began with a silent "h" or "p,"

respectively, you can say them out loud using voice search—across devices, including your desktop or laptop computer, by clicking or tapping the microphone icon in the search field. The search results Google spits out will almost certainly reveal the correct spelling. You can also type in something close to how you think a word is spelled. If you type—"nimonia," for instance—Google will surface the correct selling.

Using voice or text, you can also determine how a word is pronounced—you may get the answer in a YouTube search result or when you ask Google to "define" a word. (Google owns YouTube, after all.)

## **5. Pay attention to little words**

A search for "What is the Who" is going to summon results about the English rock band. Search instead for "What is a Who" and you see top results around the whimsical characters in Dr. Seuss' "Horton Hears a Who!"

## **6. Word order matters, too**

Leave common terms in the correct order. Typing "blue sky" yields very different results from "sky blue."

## **7. Use image search when you're remodeling**

You want some inspiration as you think about remodeling your kitchen. After typing in "kitchen remodeling" tap Images just below the Google search bar to begin a Google image search. You'll see plenty of pictures of kitchen designs. Likely too many.

So now add a minus sign to that same search along with the thing you

want to eliminate from your results. So you might type "kitchen remodeling -stainless" to leave out stainless steel. Or "kitchen remodeling -stainless -granite" to knock out both stainless and granite images. But note, the spacing between the thing you are searching for and the thing you are excluding is important—the search won't exclude the words without a space before the minus.

## 8. Use image search when looking for a job

You're preparing or updating a resume and want it to look really professional. Inside image search, type "resume" and add the type of job you're looking for: "resume lawyer," "resume teacher," "resume accountant," for example. You can compare your own resume to the samples shown. Moreover, above the resume images that show up, are oval tabs to help you refine your search, along the lines of "entry level," "cover letter," "staff accountant," etc.

## 9. When punctuation counts

Google does not recognize uppercase or lowercase letters and punctuation. But pay attention to characters such as "\$", " %" and "+" which do make a big difference.

## 10. Remembering that quote

You're searching for a specific quote, but one of the words slips your mind. Put an asterisk in its place. "Four score and \* years ago."

## 11. Finding a patent

You can search for a patent in the newly updated patents.[google.com search engine](#). You see descriptions of the patent, discover the claims the

patent holder is making, and surface images behind the patent. In some cases, Russell says, you can click on a "prior art" button to see earlier iterations of the patent.

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