



How to search the WWW

If you use an internet search engine, remember to look for information from reliable sites. A reliable site is one maintained by government, academic organizations and specialist groups such as medical associations.

Don't use Google. It does not search all sites. Rather use Dogpile (www.dogpile.com).

Don't use the simple search in any search engine. Use the advanced option.

When using advanced search, type in .edu, or .ac in the box for required words. These are part of the URL. .edu means a U.S. educational site and .ac followed by 2 more letters is an education site outside the U.S.A. e.g. www.stanford.edu is Stanford University in the U.S.A. and www.ox.ac.uk is Oxford University in the U.K. You can also use .gov (government), or .mil (military) to find reliable sites in the USA. You can also use database as a required word. While this won't remove all unreliable sites, it will initially retrieve reliable ones. Dogpile also has an option to exclude certain words. Typing .com in here will exclude many of the sites that are trying to sell things you don't want.

Use an exact phrase when you can. This helps prevent sites being returned because the words are in it, but not related to each other.

If possible, don't use the WWW directly through a search engine. Rather use an online full text database (such as those from Calgary Public Library), or databases of reliable web sites (you can access these from home too).

There are several sites which index other sites according to subject and reliability. Infomine and the WWW Virtual Library are examples. Both are reliable, but even with these try not to use "second generation searches" (clicking on a site from within another site). About.com is a good source of information, as is Wikipedia, but remember to cross check information from these with other sources. Be particularly careful if the subject you are looking for is controversial – contributors may not be impartial.

Spend 5 minutes deciding exactly what you want to search for and how you are going to do it. Write this down and look at it often. It will avoid 30 minutes of frustration.