Constructing A Search Query

Using Search Engine Math

Use a (+) or a (-) sign whenever you use more than one keyword.
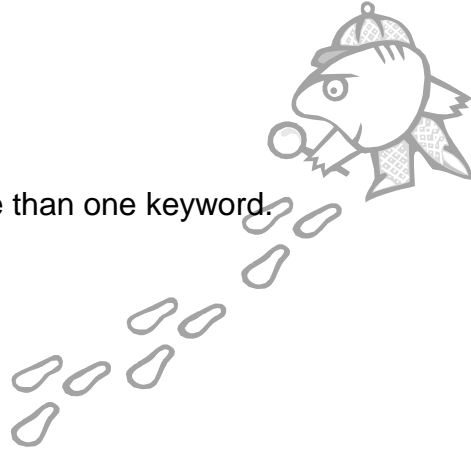
Examples:

architecture +american

architecture +american -victorian

A **plus sign** is **attached directly** (**no spaces**) to the word or phrase you want to <u>include</u> in your search.

A **minus sign** is **attached directly** (**no spaces**) to the word or phrase you want to <u>exclude</u> in your search.

Quotations

When searching for topics with **words that must be kept in an exact order**, such as a phrase, or a name made up of two separate words you should use **quotation marks**.

Examples:

"white house"

shakespeare +"midsummer night's dream"

Wildcard

Sometimes you want to cast a bigger net and look for all possible endings to a word. In these cases, you will want to use an asterisk (*) placed at the root of a word. The search tool will then return results with all possible endings. Many people like to use this in instances where there could be different results due to the differences in plural forms of a word.
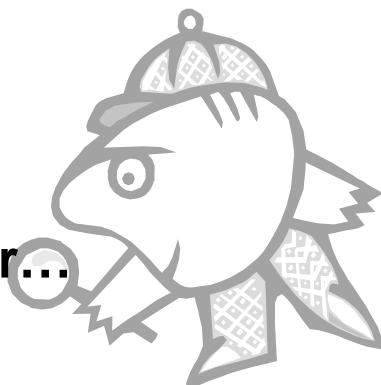
Example:

comput*	(will return results with the words compute, computer, computing, computes.)
"lesson plan*"	(will return results with both "lesson plan" and "lesson plans"

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Digging Deeper…

Searching Through Web Page Titles

You can search just through the titles of Web pages. Not all search tools index Web pages the same way. Many of them look for keywords listed in the body of the text, while others may use the title of the page as well as the text. An additional search, which looks through page titles, may result in different returns.

Example:

title:"the grapes of wrath" (**lower case** and **no space** after the colon)

Searching For Linked Pages

If you have a page that is a great resource on a topic that you are interested in, perhaps others think so too. You can perform a search to see if other pages have included a link to your really great site on their page. This may provide you with another good source or sources.

Example:

link:http://www.whitehouse.gov (**lower case** and **no space** after the colon)

Cynthia Tougas
New Bedford Public Schools

March 15, 2000

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What is Boolean?

Some search tools still require you to search using Boolean Operators. Boolean Operators are the terms And, Or, and Not. These terms are used to combine or exclude terms similar to using the plus and minus signs as shown in the previous examples. Notice that you leave spaces between the terms when using Boolean.

Examples:

architecture and american

architecture and american not victorian

What is a "Natural Language Search"?

A few search tools allow you to **phrase your search in the form of a question**. These search tools analyze the syntax of your question and pull out the keywords for you. Some of the search tools that allow you to search using natural language are AskJeeves, AskJeeves for Kids, and AltaVista. Many individuals like using the simplicity of these tools, however, they do not always yield the best results for those who need to power search.

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