

Tip of the Week: Streamline your Internet Searches

Since the Internet is a collection of all known data, researching online can be very time consuming. Somewhere among the billions of webpages lies the answer to your search request. But how can you find what you want faster? Search engines aren't artificial intelligence, and until they are, here are some tips for finding what you need online quicker!

Search for your answer, not your question

While websites like Yahoo! Answers are a great source of searchable questions, they can't provide everything. If you think your question is one that many people have had, search for it. But remember, search engines return words on web pages, so unless you expect your exact question to show up, search for your answer. Here's an example:

I am trying to contact a consultant named Mary Jones that I read about in an article. In this case, searching a question would turn up nothing because it is unlikely that anyone has asked "How can I contact Mary Jones?" I know from the article that Mary works for Jones & Jones Consulting. My search looks like this:

"Mary Jones" site:www.jjconsulting.com contact OR staff

My search results show Jones & Jones Consulting's "Contact Us" page. Mary's name is highlighted, and her email address is shown right there in the search engine. I didn't even have to go to click the link to get what I needed. Below I'll explain what I used in this search query example.

Advanced Search Features 101

There are tons of tricks to let the search engine know exactly what you want. You can go into Advanced Search, but if you're looking to save time, which I always am, then these commands will make your life easier:

- **"Quotation Marks"** are used to search for an exact phrase. In my example, I didn't want other people named Mary, so I made sure to search for her first and last name in quotation marks.
- **OR** lets the search engine know that you only need at least one of the words mentioned. You can chain an OR query together to have more than two

words as well: contact OR staff OR bios. You must type OR in all capital letters for this to work.

- **Site:** means that you only want to look at pages within a certain website. I knew that the website for Jones & Jones consulting was jjconsulting.com, so I was able to narrow down my search with this feature. Make sure not to put a space between the colon and the website.
- **- (Minus)** is used to exclude words from your results. Again, make sure not to put a space between the minus and the word.
- **Filetype:** is used the same way “site:” is, except that it narrows your results down to web pages of specific file extensions. If you’re looking for a report or excerpt of a text, you’ll probably want to find a .pdf file, in which case you would add filetype:pdf to the end of your search.

We hope these tips help save you time during your searching!

If you have a time management tip, we would love to hear it. Share with our readers in the comments section below. Happy (speedy) surfing!