

Research Skill: Tips & Tricks for researching what you need quickly

Finding specifically what you are looking for online can take a long time. If you are a business person, an engineer, physician, lawyer, or any other professional, you **MUST** use time efficiently to find information.

NEVER drive around from shop to shop looking for something until you consult the internet. The time it takes to walk to the car could have found what you are looking for on the internet; or even the phone book. If you know a store near you has it, call and check to see if it is in stock; don't waste your time.

The same is true when you want to learn some piece of information.

One method for a product search is as follows; always do a little research before questioning someone.

If you don't know where to get what you are looking for:

1. www.wikipedia.com and www.about.com
 - a. learn a little about what you are looking for; potential alternatives
2. www.google.com
 - a. see keyword short-cuts for finding information below
3. www.ebay.com
 - a. most often "new" products for 1/2 the cost as compared to elsewhere
4. www.yp.com
 - a. businesses that can help you identify what you are looking for
5. www.superpages.com
 - a. electronic phonebook
6. paperback phonebook
7. experts you know that might have an idea

All of these can provide you with good keywords to use in your search. For example, after not being able to find what you are looking for online, while searching online you might learn some industry keywords to use when talking to an expert you know, so that they can zone-in on what you need faster.

For Google, use some of the advanced keyword helpers to focus your search efficiency. The following represents some of the tricks you can use to isolate a search from millions of URL hits, to 10 hits or less:

Example: I don't know anything about conveyor belts for moving garbage from one location to another. I'm tasked with identifying a conveyor belt type and ultimately purchasing one for less than \$1,000.

1. What is a conveyor belt, and what types are there?
www.wikipedia.com
www.about.com
2. Where can I get a conveyor belt for less than \$1,000 which includes shipping?

www.google.com

keyword sequences to focus your search

- Individual words used in search
 - conveyor belt
 - results in millions of hits where every webpage that has conveyor AND belt anywhere in the webpage pops up on the search results
 - information about news stories, products that use conveyor belts... everything
 - will take you a long time to find what you are looking for
- keywords within quotation marks
 - "conveyor belt"
 - only web pages that have those exact words put together are in the search results

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- keywords separated by the capitalized word OR
 - "conveyor belt" new OR used
 - OR only acts on the two adjacent letter combinations
 - results in every webpage that has "conveyor belt" AND either has new somewhere in that document or has used somewhere in that document
 - results in only companies selling conveyor belts
- keywords preceded by a minus sign
 - -restaurant
 - the minus sign indicates to ignore every webpage that has the word restaurant
 - I use this often, and you can just keep adding words to ignore
 - -plastic -"needs work" -rusty
- finding web pages only on a specific website
 - site:www.someurl.com conveyor
 - Often times you find a website that has a lot of unrelated information and products, hundreds of pages. So you want to only look at the pages on that website that you have interest
 - results in only web pages on that specific website that have the word conveyor
 - ONLY web pages on that website will come up
- Finding internet documents of a specific file type
 - filetype:pdf "conveyor belt" "user manual"
 - Often times you will be looking for a specific type of file like PDF files because most likely manuals about a specific topic are available and you want to see the information in that format
 - ONLY links to pdf files will result in the search
 - type delimiters, pdf in the above case, can alternately be doc, exe, xls, ppt...
- Finding prices for a product between two limits
 - "conveyor belt: \$10..\$1000"
 - results in only web pages that have a dollar amount listed inclusively between \$10 and \$1000
 - \$9 and \$1001 would be ignored, while \$583.32 would be in your search list
 - however, any other product on the same page as conveyor belt that costs \$51.32 would also come up
- Using multiple tricks in the same search
 - "new mexico" "conveyor belt" \$10..\$1000 new OR used -news -travel -amazon -studies
 - Concatenation is where you can use more than one keyword tool at the same time for the search
 - You can use any combination of the above tools in any order when separated by a space
 - This is very powerful. You can reduce the number of results down to just a few very specific web pages very quickly.
 - But if these don't work the first time, change your keywords and possibly call an expert to get some suggestions. But always consult the internet first so you can talk intelligently to your expert.

You can find a large variety of other useful search tools at:

<http://www.google.com/cse/docs/resultsxml.html>