

5 Advanced Gmail Search Operators You Should Know

By Tina Sieber

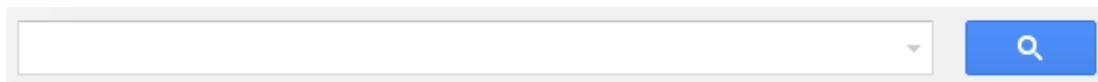
Gmail is an ingenious webmail client with many awesome features. Being a Google service, one of its strengths obviously is Search. And this is exactly how Google revolutionised e-mail. While every other e-mail client focused on sorting e-mails, Google focused on what they do best. In Gmail you don't really have to worry about filing or sorting e-mails because you can always find them in a matter of seconds using the Search.

While you will easily get to most e-mails with a plain keyword search, it does help to know some advanced Gmail search operators to quickly find very specific e-mails. This article highlights 5 advanced Gmail search operators. It goes without saying that the Gmail Search works almost exactly like Google Search. To construct a good search query in any Google service, it is beneficial to understand some basic rules. You can review a complete list of Gmail search operators on Gmail's advanced search page (<https://support.google.com/mail/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=7190>) and to learn more on how to write search queries, you can read this timeless article (<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/master-the-google-search-like-a-god-save-time/>).

Search is one of the "The 10 Best Features That Keep Me in Gmail" (<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/roundup-10-features-gmail/>) and I have previously written about this feature in more detail (<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/search-e-mails-gmail/>). Note, however, that Gmail Search has been updated significantly since this last article was published.

The Basics of Gmail Search

Let me start off with some basics for those who are yet unfamiliar with Gmail Search. Those of you using Gmail will know the search bar in the very top. Have you ever bothered to click the little arrow in its very right?



This is how you open Gmail's search options, i.e. a form that offers basic search fields to fill in.



Search ×

All Mail

From

To

Subject

Has the words

Doesn't have

Has attachment

Date within **1 day** of

Examples: Friday, today, Mar 26, 3/26/04

[Create filter with this search »](#)

The form is a shortcut if you want to search in a specific folder/label, an e-mail from or to a specific person, the e-mail subject, or within a specific time frame. In most cases, using the form is much quicker than typing out the respective search operators.

Advanced Search Operators

Now that the basics are out of the way, let's look at advanced operators that may come in handy.

1. filename:

The search form shown above lets you search e-mails that have an attachment. Simply check the respective box in the form. The *filename:* operator is a more advanced way to search e-mails with attachments. You can pair it with any part of the file name, including the file type. So you could search for *filename:london* to search for any attachments that have the word *london* in the file name. Or you could search for *filename:pdf* to find any attachments that are PDF documents.

filename:doc

filename:doc

filename:jpg

filename:pdf

filename:ppt

Search the web for "filename:" Shift + Enter

Do you find this operator interesting and would you like to know more? Then have a look at these articles:

- How To Quickly Find Messages With Attachments In Gmail (<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/quickly-find-e-mail-attachments-gmail/>)
- 3 Ways To Free Up Storage Space In Your Gmail Account (<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/3-ways-free-storage-space-gmail-account/>)

2. after: & before:

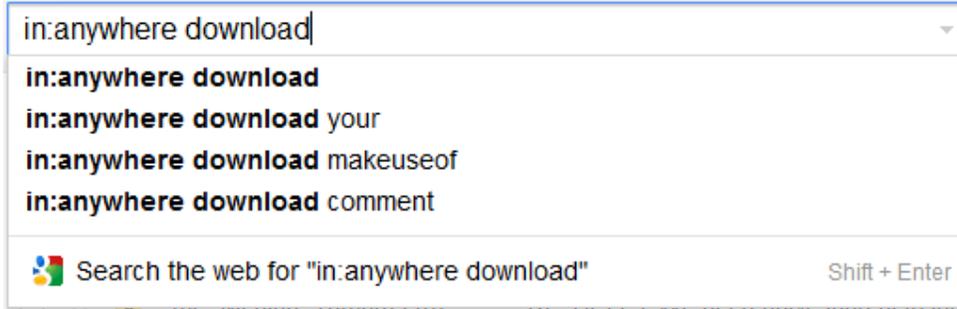
Personally, I find the *date within* search option in the form shown above a little complicated. Thus I prefer to use the *before:* and *after:* search operators. Use them by themselves to search before or after a certain date and use them together to search a time frame.



after:2012/05/01 before:2012/06/03

3. in:anywhere

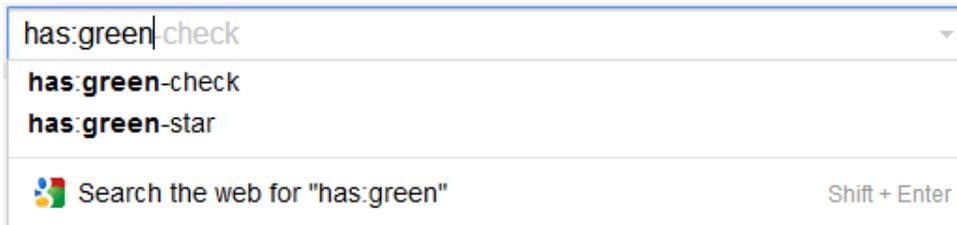
This operator may seem a little odd at first because wouldn't you think that the Search is searching anywhere by default? Well, not quite. Per default, messages in Spam and Trash are excluded from search results. If, for some reason, you want to include e-mails in these folders, you can use the *in:anywhere* operator, followed by your keyword.



By the way, the screenshot above reveals that Gmail Search is showing actual e-mail content in auto-complete. Good to know, right? Also see our update from May 2012 on this topic (<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/gmail-search-improves-with-auto-complete-based-on-actual-e-mail-content-updates/>).

4. Search Starred E-mails

This point is special since it doesn't feature an advanced operator, but an advanced query. Using the *has:* operator paired with the respective star name, you can search e-mails starred with a specific star.



Gmail offers up to 12 stars to highlight or star your e-mail. Here is a complete list of the whole dozen:

- yellow-star
- yellow-bang
- orange-star
- orange-guillemet
- red-star
- red-bang
- purple-star
- purple-question
- blue-star
- blue-info
- green-star
- green-check

5. **is:chats**

The chat logs of your Gmail chat or GTalk are stored in the respective Gmail account. If you ever want to find a detail from one of your conversations, you can specifically search your GTalk logs using the *is:chats* operator, followed by the search term.



is:chats dave

In a similar fashion, you can also search *in:circles*.

Trivia

Curiously, there used to be a search operator called *language:* or *lang:* that would allow you to find e-mails written in a specific language. This one must have been discontinued, since it is no longer working for me. Or does it work for you?

Source: http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/5-advanced-gmail-search-operators-you-should-know/?utm_campaign=newsletter&utm_source=2012-09-26