

Search Engine Tricks

Having a hard time finding something online? Does it seem like you type in your search term but don't get anywhere near what you're looking for?

Well, here are a couple tricks that seem (almost) universal between search engines.

Let's say you're looking for sports cars and all you're getting is information on baseball and football (sports). What can you do? Try some of the following:

1. Try:

sports +cars

Most search engines will interpret this as meaning you only want results that have both the word "sports" and "cars" in them. Some search engines let you use the word "and" to do this as well (i.e. sports and cars).

2. You can also try to exclude terms. Let's say you still aren't getting what you want with sports cars (you still keep getting baseball info). Try something like:

sports +cars -baseball

The "-" sign tells most search engines to exclude results that have whatever word it is that has the "-" in front of it. (Don't put a space between the - and the word to be excluded though!)

3. If the above seems too confusing, most search engines have an "advanced search" option that gives you a web-style way to help you accomplish the same thing. Instead of using "+ / -" they use drop down boxes and option buttons. It is usually easier to search this way, although it's probably faster to use steps 1 & 2.
4. The next thing you might try is being more specific. Instead of just **sports cars**, maybe use **exotic sports cars**. Try different combinations of search terms until you get what you're after. (Careful with that word "exotic" though!)
5. Also, you may want to try using quotes. If you type in:
"sports cars"

You should only get results that match that exact phrase in that exact order. Sometimes that can narrow things down considerably.

6. If all else fails, try a different search engine.

Of course the favourite is Google, but there are thousands of search engines out there and not all of them support the tips I have shown you today. If you're having trouble, look for a link for search tips, search help, advanced search, or how to search. Most search engines have lots of information on how to use them successfully.