
Internet Search Tools

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I. Which Search Tool Will Work Best for You?

* Search Engines * Subject Directories * Metasearchers

Consider the following questions when selecting the appropriate search tool:

- A. Have you considered the academic databases, available through ODU Library, which are included in your tuition? These are the best option for scholarly research online.
- B. Do you need a general search tool or one that specializes?
e.g., **Google** (general) vs. **FindLaw** (specialized)
- C. Which tools seem to give you consistently *relevant* results?
- D. Do you need any special features to aid in your search?

II. Keyword Search Engines

Why use a search engine?

Search engines, such as **Google**, allow you to search for information primarily by keyword, that is, any word or words you specify. A search engine roams the web searching for matches to your words, which may be in the full text of web sites, title pages, URLs, headings, HTML tags, or other metatags. Results are arranged by some criteria (often relevancy) and are listed with a hotlink to web sites with matching keyword(s), the title of the web page, and the URL for the web page.

Examples:

Ask	http://www.ask.com	Exalead (UK)	http://www.exalead.com
Google	http://www.google.com	Gigablast	http://gigablast.com
Live Search	http://www.livesearch.com	Yahoo! Search	http://www.yahoo.com

III. Subject Directories

Why use a subject directory?

Subject directories available on the Internet through sites like **Infomine** are organized into topic lists. They allow you to choose a major topic and then to narrow it down by choosing from lists of sub-topics. As you make choices, the scope of your subject will become more focused. For this reason, subject directories are very helpful when you are trying to pick a subject to research.

Examples:

BizWeb	http://www.bizweb.com	Complete Planet	http://completeplanet.com
Google Directory	http://www.google.com/dirhp	Infomine	http://infomine.ucr.edu
Intute (UK)	http://www.intute.ac.uk	Open Directory Project	http://www.dmoz.org
Starting Point	http://www.stpt.com	YellowPages	http://www.yellowpages.com

IV. Multi-Engine Searchers (or Metasearchers)

Why use a metasearcher?

Metasearchers search more than one search engine at a time. Using a metasearcher, such as **Dogpile** or **Metacrawler**, is faster than searching each individual engine one by one.

However, the trade-off for increased speed is that you will lose most of the specificity of searching with an individual search engine. Each search engine (e.g., Google, Lycos) uses special ways to limit your search, such as limiting to a specific language or using Boolean searching. This may be lost in the translation from the metasearcher to the individual engines it runs your search on.

Examples:

Dogpile <http://www.dogpile.com> **Mamma** <http://www.mamma.com>
Metacrawler <http://www.metacrawler.com> **Search.com** <http://www.search.com>

V. Net/Web Review Sites

The following Web sites offer evaluative reviews of Web sites, similar to book reviews, where users can find out about a site's content, organization, validity, relevancy, and other evaluative information.

- **Digital Librarian** <http://www.digital-librarian.com>
A librarian's choice of the best of the Web.
- **Jump City** <http://www.jumpcity.com/start.shtml>
Has smaller collection of Web site reviews.

VI. Search Engine & Subject Directory Review Sites

The following Web sites offer evaluative reviews of all the search engines, subject directories, and meta-searchers and other information. Find out which options the search tools offer.

- **Search Engine Showdown** <http://www.searchengineshowdown.com>
Excellent site that provides searching tips and reviews many search tools, and provides the latest news updates on search tools.
- **Search Engine Watch** <http://searchenginewatch.com>
Comprehensive site on searching methods, reviews, and news.