

Search Engine Marketing

Information note: "Teleporting" and Google search within a site.

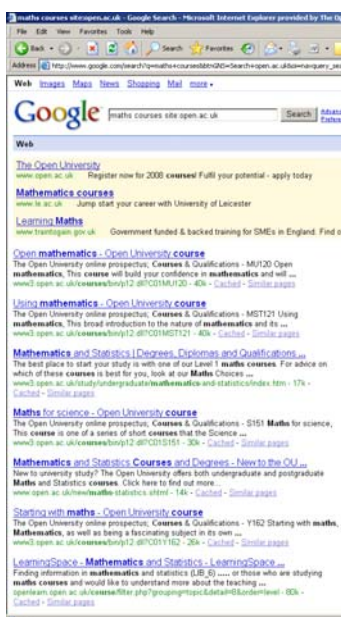
Whilst studying trends relating to the phenomenon of "teleporting", typing the name of a site (or brand) into Google to retrieve the website address, Google noticed that there were a lot of searchers who would immediately follow this search with a more refined search within this site.

So at the beginning of March 2008, Google announced that it was rolling out its new **Search within a site (SiS)** feature. When searching for specific sites instead of keywords, users are able to conduct a secondary search of those sites within Google results.

What does it look like?

For example if a user searches for "Open University" at Google, the first result returns www.open.ac.uk. Underneath that result is a search box with a submit button with the text "Search open.ac.uk."

When entering a search term into this box Google then performs a site search and returns only results from the site in question. This is identical to the site search found on the Google advanced search, where the word "site" followed by a colon enables you to restrict your search to a specific site.



Why have they added this feature?

"Through experimentation, we found that presenting users with a search box as part of the result increases their likelihood of finding the exact page they are looking for,"

Ben Lee, software developer, and Jack Menzel, product manager on the Official Google Blog.

Who has this feature?

Google appears to be providing the site search feature only for certain sites. It is appearing for a significant number of UK university searches and major retailers.

Pros? It will help users find what they are looking for

- Targeted searching of open.ac.uk domain.
- Will “teleport” users direct to the result they are looking for rather than navigate a series of pages on the site.
- Google may find things that the OU’s own search function cannot.

Cons ? We might lose traffic to our competitors

- Google search results pages have ads, often displaying the products from competitors.
- The search-within-search feature keeps searchers on Google’s pages, so the traffic is mostly Google’s, not the OU’s.

Industry response

Some brands have been upset by this, because it creates a situation in which other marketers can advertise to customers via AdWords even as they are searching the brand’s site. Some retailers are asking Google to turn off this search-within-search feature for their sites. For instance, the feature does not work for Internet retailing giant Amazon.com, which has apparently requested exclusion. According to a Google spokeswoman, the company has honoured such requests from “a couple” of unnamed businesses. These companies, however, may not be able to reverse their decisions.

OU response

Preliminary observations suggest that this tool may be beneficial to the OU. A significant number of searches referred to the university web site from Google are by our brand name “Open University”, indicating that searchers are using “teleporting” to find us. This tool would enable them to refine their search before entering our site.

We will be undertaking analysis of search traffic from Google both pre- and post- launch of the tool to ensure that:

- There has been no loss of traffic
- There has been no significant loss in conversion