

Being digital

Target your Google search

1: Introduction

Google is a powerful search tool, and often a simple keyword search is all that is required to get the results you need. But sometimes your search may not return relevant results, or you might have to scan through pages of results to find something useful. What can you do?

Google provides a range of advanced search options, and you may not be aware of these. These advanced options allow you to create more targeted searches, helping you to find the most relevant information quickly.

In this activity we will explore some of Google's advanced features.

This activity will cover:

- advanced search techniques
- searching by format
- general search tips.

2: Advanced options

Scenario

Imagine that you want to find some information on **good nutrition**. You want the information to come from a reliable source, and you would like it to be **easy to read**. It's just for personal use. How could you use Google's advanced search options to create a more targeted search?

The step-by-step guide below takes you through the options that you could use to target your search more effectively

Basic search

You start by doing a basic Google search using the keywords **good nutrition**. There are over 30,000,000 results and they are of mixed quality. It could take a while to scan through to find what you need. What could you do to start narrowing down the search?

Advanced

Google's advanced search screen provides a range of options to help you target your search. You can access the advanced screen by clicking on Settings and selecting **Advanced search** (you may need to choose Google Search from the menu of Google services to see the Settings option). We are going to explore some of the functions this tool offers.

Domain

Google's advanced search screen allows you to limit your search by domain (e.g. .gov for government sites). Google also lets you specify a particular website to search within.

You can also limit your results by using the domain search option to find information from the NHS website (.nhs.uk), which should be a reliable source. But there are still over 40,000 results. What else could we do to target the search?

Reading level

Google allows you to specify reading level; basic, intermediate, and advanced. For this scenario we can choose 'basic' to get information that is easy to read. We now have just over 3,000 results.

Last updated

You might decide that you only want up-to-date information, so you could limit the search to only find information that has been updated in the last year.

Summary

In this scenario, we have used Google's advanced search options to limit our search to information from a reliable source that is easy to read and is up-to-date. We have greatly reduced the number of search results from our initial search, and they contain some useful, relevant information.

3: Formats

Google allows you to limit your search by format (e.g. videos, news, or images). This can be a very quick and easy way to focus your search if one particular format will best meet your needs.

When you do a basic Google search you get a list of format options to choose from. These are located in the left-hand navigation bar of your search results page. The list includes:

- Everything
- Images
- Maps
- Videos
- News
- Shopping
- Books
- Places
- Blogs
- Discussions
- Applications
- Patents

Think about the following information needs.

- You want to find out what people are saying about the TV show last night
- You would like a tutorial to learn to sail
- You want to find the latest on current political debates
- You want to buy a new vacuum cleaner
- You want to get directions to a friend's house

Which formats would you choose for these? To help you decide, we've provided some details on each one over the next two pages.

Everything

Searching everything is often a good option because you may be interested to see all the different information available on your topic, regardless of the format.

Images

Probably not for any of the topics in this activity, but there are times when the image search is very useful.

Maps

This could be helpful if we wanted to get some directions.

Videos

A video might be a good choice if you wanted to learn a practical skill, like sailing a boat for example.

News

This would be a good option to choose to find out more about current political debates. This option would bring back results from a selection of different news sources.

Shopping

If you were looking for products to buy online, like the vacuum cleaner in this activity, then this would be a good option. But if you were also interested in reviews of products you might want to do a search for everything and include reviews as a keyword in your search.

Books

It's possible that you might find a helpful book on how to sail a boat, but a video might be the most useful option. There are a number of 'how to' videos freely available which can be good at teaching practical skills.

You can use the Books option to search for books to buy, and for free Google ebooks available in full text online.

Places

Probably not for any of the topics in this activity.

Blogs

You could use this option to find out what people are saying about the TV show last night, but the Discussions option might be the best one for this.

The Blogs option searches for blogs on your topic, as well as individual blog entries. Blogs are a bit like online diaries with new entries added at the top.

Discussions

This might be the best option to find out what people are saying about the TV show last night. The Discussions option searches for discussion threads on your topic.

Applications

Probably not for any of the topics in this activity.

Patents

Probably not for any of the topics in this activity.

4: Summary

In this activity we have looked at some of Google's advanced search options, and the ability to search by format (e.g. news, videos). Using these options can help you target your search and find relevant information quickly.

Tips

- Find out more about Google's advanced search options. They can really help to improve your search results.
- Check back from time to time because Google are always adding new features.
- Don't use too many search options at once - you might miss useful information if you apply too many limits to your search.
- Know when to stop searching. Sometimes the information is just not there, or you might need to select a different search tool.

Next steps

Try some of these Google search features for yourself. Go to [Google's 'Advanced search'](#) page, and look through the search options available. Try some of them out, and think about how you might use them to improve your searches in the future.

References

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