

About the Authors

Mikal Belicove is a seasoned blogger and information-age visionary who's hotwired to the Internet and the Internet community. Mikal maintains his own blog at Belicove.com, where he encourages the exploration and exchange of ideas in the online community. His enthusiasm over electronic publishing and information sharing and his drive to steer others to the highest-quality web resources boost this version of Que's *Internet Yellow Pages* to the next level. Mikal currently freelances as a business blogging strategist, brand positioning and marketing consultant, and publicist. His work involves consulting with his clients on the most effective ways to establish authentic "thought-leader" status through their blogs and websites.

Joe Kraynak has taught hundreds of thousands of novice computer users how to master their computers and their software. His long list of computer books includes *Easy Internet*, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Computer Basics*, *Using and Upgrading PCs*, and *Absolute Beginner's Guide to Excel*. Joe's wide range of computer and training experience has helped him develop a strong commitment to making computers, software, and the Internet more easily accessible to users of all levels of experience.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

As the reader of this book, *you* are our most important critic and commentator. We value your opinion and want to know what we're doing right, what we could do better, what areas you'd like to see us publish in, and any other words of wisdom you're willing to pass our way.

As an associate publisher for Que Publishing, I welcome your comments. You can email or write me directly to let me know what you did or didn't like about this book—as well as what we can do to make our books better.

Please note that I cannot help you with technical problems related to the topic of this book. We do have a User Services group, however, where I will forward specific technical questions related to the book.

When you write, please be sure to include this book's title and author as well as your name, email address, and phone number. I will carefully review your comments and share them with the authors and editors who worked on the book.

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THE SECRETS OF SUCCESSFUL SEARCHING

by Michael Miller

The most common activity for web users isn't online shopping or auctions, and it isn't downloading MP3 files, and it isn't even playing online games or viewing dirty pictures. No, the most common web-based activity is *searching*. That's because the Web is big and disorganized, so you have to actively search for just about anything you want to find. The reality is that most users spend at least part of every Internet session searching for some type of information—and hating every minute of it!

There are a number of perfectly valid reasons people hate searching the Web. First, searching isn't easy—or, at least, it's not always intuitive. Second, it isn't immediately gratifying because you seldom find what you're looking for (on the first try, anyway). And third, it isn't fun—unless you're one of those odd birds who thinks thumbing back and forth through the cross-references in an encyclopedia is a blast.

Those objections aside, you're still forced to search the Web for the information you want. Fortunately, the more you know about *how* and *where* to search, the more likely it is you'll find what you're looking for, fast.

THE NEEDLE-IN-THE-HAYSTACK PROBLEM

Here's something you need to know: Web searching is more an art than a science. You need to develop a *feel* for how and where to search; following a set of hard-and-fast rules won't always deliver the best results. That's because every search site not only operates differently, but also contains a different set of data; entering the same identical query at different sites more often than not produces wildly different results.

So, even though the act of searching is deceptively easy (just enter a query in a Search box and click a button), finding useful information is hard. Of course, it doesn't help that the Internet is big—really, *really* big—more than 80 billion documents and growing! With these numbers, your odds of finding a single page of information on the Web are in the neighborhood of 80 billion to 1.

The size problem is compounded by the fact that information online is not stored or organized in any logical fashion. You have to realize that the Internet itself is not run or managed by any central organization; the

Web is nothing more than a collection of millions of individual computers, all connected by a bunch of wires and wireless signals crisscrossing the globe. Nobody is in charge; therefore, everybody has to manage his or her own computers and servers with no rules or regulations for guidance.

In addition, no standards or guidelines require laying out web pages so that certain types of information always display the same way, using the same words, positioned in the same place. There is no guarantee that the topic described in a web page's title is even mentioned in the text of the page. There is no assurance that a page that was on the Web yesterday will still be there tomorrow.

In short, the Web is a mess.

THE ART OF SEARCHING

Not surprisingly, over the years several attempts have been made to organize this mess we call the Internet. This book, Que's *Internet Yellow Pages*, is one such attempt. However, as helpful as this book is, all attempts to organize the Internet ultimately fall short, simply because the Internet is *so* big and *so* disorganized and growing *so* fast. Even the best attempts (and I view this book as one of the best) can document only a small part of the Internet; literally billions of other web pages go undocumented.

So, when you're looking for something on the Internet, you should first go to a good printed directory, such as this book. If you can't find what you're looking for there—or if you're looking for even more current information—where do you turn?

You are now faced with the prospect of *searching the Internet*. But if there are no rules for *storing* information on the Internet, what procedures can you follow when you're *searching* for information?

To get good results—results that zero in precisely on the information you want, without throwing in pages and pages of irrelevant data—you need to know the right way to search. And the right way to search is all about asking the right questions.

Imagine you're a detective questioning a suspect, and you have only a limited number of questions you can ask. Do you waste a question by asking, "Where were you on the night of the crime?" The suspect can answer that question many different ways, most of them vague: "California." "Home." "Out." "Someplace better than here."

A better question is one that is more precise, and allows less latitude in the way it is answered. "Were you at 1234 Berrywood Lane on the night of the crime?" This question has only two acceptable

answers: “Yes” or “No.” Either of these answers will give you the information you’re looking for, with no chance for evasion or misinterpretation.

Searching the Web is like playing detective. Ask the right questions, and you get useful answers. Ask vague questions, and you get useless answers.

Effective searching requires a combination of innate ability, productive habits, and specific skills. It also helps to have a kind of “sixth sense” about where to look for information, and a lot of patience to make it through those long stretches when you can’t seem to find anything useful, no matter how hard you try.

In other words, successful searching is a blend of art and science, of intuition and expertise—something some are born with and others have to learn.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SEARCH ENGINES AND DIRECTORIES—AND WHY YOU SHOULD CARE

Hundreds of websites enable you to search the Internet for various types of information. The best of these sites are among the most popular sites on the Web, period—even though each of these sites approaches the search problem in its own unique fashion.

Directories: Manually Cataloging Web Pages

One approach to organizing the Web is to physically look at each web page and stick each one into a hand-picked category. After you collect enough web pages, you have something called a *directory*. Directories can be appealing because they enable you to browse for a website by category, often finding what you didn’t know you were really looking for. Most directories also provide a Search box for searching for specific sites in the directory.

A directory doesn’t search the Web; in fact, a directory catalogs only a small part of the Web. However, a directory is organized and easy to use, and lots and lots of people use web directories every day.

Many directories are specialized—designed to be used by people sharing a common interest or having a special need. For example, Education Planet (www.educationplanet.com) catalogs information and websites specifically for teachers.

Search Engines: Scouring the Web, Automatically

It’s important to note that a directory is *not* a search engine. A *search engine* is not powered by human hands; instead, a search engine uses a special type of software program (called a *spider* or *crawler*) to roam the Web automatically, feeding what it finds back to a massive bank of computers. These computers hold *indexes* of the Web. In some cases, entire web pages are indexed; in other cases, only the titles and important words on a page are indexed. (Different search engines operate differently, you see.)

In any case, as the spiders and crawlers operate like little robot web surfers, the computers back at home base create a huge index (or database) of what was found. The largest search engine index (Google) contains more than eight billion entries—which still leaves the vast majority of the Web untouched and unavailable to searchers.

When you go to a search engine, you enter a *query* into a Search box on the home page. This query represents, to the best of your descriptive ability, the specific information you’re looking for. When you click the Search button, your query is sent to the search engine’s index—*not* out to the Internet itself. (You never actually search the Web itself; you search only the index that was created by the spiders crawling the Web.) The search engine then creates a list of pages *in its index* that match, to one degree or another, the query you entered.

And that’s how you get results from a search engine.

Directories or Search Engines: Which Is Better?

So, which is better, a directory or a search engine? What is better for you depends on what you want:

- If you want the *most* results, use a search engine. (A search engine’s automatic index is *much* bigger than a manually constructed directory.)
- If you want the *best handpicked* results, use a directory. (People generally make better decisions than machines.)
- If you want the most *current* results, use a search engine. (Search engine bots crawl the Web daily; it takes time for human beings to manually enter and delete directory entries.)
- If you want the *best-organized* results, use a directory. (Human editors are best at sorting the results into the proper categories.)

It's tempting to say that search engines deliver quantity, and directories deliver quality, but that isn't always the case. Some of the best and most powerful search engines—such as Google—can deliver quality results matching or besting those from the top directories. And, to complicate matters even further, many search engine sites include web directories as part of their services—and the major directories often include search engine add-ons. It's all very confusing.

WHERE TO SEARCH

There are, by several counts, more than 200 separate search engines and directories on the Internet. With that many options available, you almost need a search engine to search for a search engine!

If you go by usage trends, however, you end up with a couple of big search sites and then a long list of “other” sites. The Big Two are a search engine and a directory: Google and Yahoo! The “other” category includes all the other sites.

Google

The most popular search engine today is Google (www.google.com). Google offers a huge search index (more than eight billion entries), highly relevant search results, extremely fast searches, and a variety of specialty searches.

The basic Google search page is extremely simple; you get a Search box and a Google Search button. You also get an I'm Feeling Lucky button, which will take you directly to the first listing on the Google results page. (I don't recommend feeling lucky; it's better to view a variety of result listings, just to get a feel for what else is available.)

In addition to its main web search, Google also offers the following specialty searches, all available from links near the top of the main page:

- **Images**—This option lets you search for pictures and graphics. Because a normal text-based search typically ignores pictures in its results, you can use this search when you're looking for specific types of images.
- **Groups**—This option enables you to search the Internet's Usenet newsgroup archives. You can search the entire archive, or narrow your search by date or newsgroup.
- **News**—This page gathers the top news stories from more than 4,500 news sources on the Web and presents you with a front page, headline “newspaper.” Here, you can keep yourself informed about U.S. and world news, sports, business, entertainment, and health.

- **Froogle**—A search engine specifically for online shopping. Froogle lets you search thousands of online stores for the lowest prices on items you want to buy.
- **Local**—To find local businesses, services, or organizations, click Local and enter the search term along with a city and state or ZIP code. Google displays a list of businesses or services that match your search term and are located in the specified geographical area.

You can perform either simple or advanced searches from Google's main page, using the wildcards, modifiers, and Boolean operators discussed later in this introductory material. Even easier, you can click the Advanced Search link and use the form-based features on Google's Advanced Search page. Here, you can fine-tune your search by language, date, file format, domain, or keyword. (If your search turns up pages from foreign-language sources, Google often provides a link for translating the page!)

Google also offers filtered searches via its SafeSearch feature. SafeSearch is a great way for kids to search the Web; when it's activated, inappropriate content is filtered from Google's normal search results. (You activate SafeSearch from the Advanced Search page or by clicking the Preferences link on Google's home page.) And, Google has its own search toolbar that you can add to your browser! Click the More link on Google's opening page to access links to the toolbar and learn more about other features and tools.

Google features some advanced search operators that can really optimize the results it returns:

- **cache:** shows the version of the web page that Google has in its cache. For example, **cache:www.foxnews.com** shows the snapshot of the Fox News web page that Google took when it indexed the site. (Note that there is no space between cache: and the site's address.)
- **link:** shows all sites that link to the specified site. Type **link:** immediately followed by the site's address—no spaces.
- **related:** shows all pages that have similar data to the specified page. You can find related pages two ways. The first way is to type **related:** followed by the address of the website or page; for example, **related: www.google.com/help.html**. Another way is to perform a search as you normally do, and then in the list of search results, click Similar Pages next to the description of the page for which you want to view related pages.
- **info:** displays any information that Google has about the specified web page.

- **define:** displays a definition for the specified word.
- **stocks:** displays the current price of a stock for the specified ticker symbol.
- **site:** limits the search to a specific domain. For example, if you search for **caribbean cruise site:www.carnival.com**, Google searches only the www.carnival.com sites for “caribbean cruise.”
- **allintitle:** shows only those pages that have in their title all the search words you entered. For example, **allintitle:stand up comedy** looks only for pages that have the words *stand*, *up*, and *comedy* in their titles. Without this, Google searches for pages that have the specified words anywhere in their title or text.
- **intitle:** shows only those pages that have the word directly following intitle: in their title. For example, **intitle:holistic medicine** finds only pages that have *holistic* in their title and *medicine* in their title or anywhere else on the page. Note that no space can be between intitle: and the key word.
- **allinurl:** shows only those pages that have in their URL (page address) all the search words you entered. For example, **allinurl:jazz club** looks only for pages that have *jazz* and *club* in their URL.
- **inurl:** shows only those pages that have the word directly following inurl: in their URL. For example, **inurl:coaching soccer** finds only pages that have *coaching* in their URL and *soccer* in their URL, title, or anywhere else on the page. Note that no space can be between inurl: and the key-word.

For additional details on how to properly enter these operators and limitations to them, go to www.google.com/help/operators.html.

Yahoo!

Over the years, Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com) has been transformed from a search directory into more of a standard search engine. Search bots are responsible for 99 percent of the pages in the databases. However, Yahoo! also features a searchable directory of hand-picked sites reviewed by its editors. When you first arrive at Yahoo!, it displays the Search the Web box, where you can type your search terms to search all the web pages Yahoo! has indexed. To search only the directory, click the Directory link. Yahoo! also features special searches for images (photos and illustrations) and video, local businesses and services, news, and products. If you would like to browse the Yahoo!

directory, as you could in the good old days, scroll down the page and click the More Yahoo! Web Directory link. You can then follow the trail of links to the desired content.

Everybody Else

When it comes to the “other” search sites, the best of the rest tend to be defined by their convenience rather than their results. That’s because most of these other sites (such as Yahoo!, actually) are really full-service *portals* that offer search features, rather than dedicated search engines. (Of course, Yahoo! is a portal, too, so being a portal isn’t necessarily a negative.)

That doesn’t mean that these sites don’t give good results; some are almost as good as Google, and most are better than Yahoo!. But most of these sites probably wouldn’t get much traffic at all if it weren’t for all the other information and services they offer, so searching is definitely an auxiliary function.

Just what are these “other” sites? Here’s an alphabetic list of the most popular of these second-level search options:

- **About.com (www.about.com)**—In the recent past, About.com has become less of a general search site and more of a collection of articles and links. The site is organized into thousands of major categories managed by human “guides”; the site has a strong editorial voice and covers more than 50,000 topics.
- **AllTheWeb (www.alltheweb.com)**—AllTheWeb is the official site for the FAST search engine, which rivals Google in terms of size and speed. It also offers separate news, pictures, video, and audio searches.
- **AltaVista (www.altavista.com)**—AltaVista is a powerful, no-frills search engine that indexes a huge number of sites. In addition to normal text searches, AltaVista also offers audio, video, image, and news searches; and it includes a directory listing. You can limit your search to the United States, expand it to a worldwide search, or specify language preferences—all languages or only English and Spanish.
- **AOL Search (search.aol.com)**—AOL Search is a streamlined search tool that sports some “smart” features that give the search process a more human feel. As you type your search term, AOL Search “guesses” ahead and completes the entry for you. The search results page includes a navigation bar on the left that breaks the search results down into categories, including web matches, images, video, audio, news, and local.

- **Ask (www.ask.com)**—Ask got its start as a “natural-language” search engine that enables you to ask questions in plain English. That didn’t work too well, so today Ask offers more traditional search index results, as well as picture, product, and news searches.
- **HotBot (www.hotbot.com)**—HotBot used to be a major contender in the search engine wars, but in recent years has been eclipsed by Google’s strength and power. It’s still a relatively big and relatively fast search engine, and also offers buttons for searching Google and Ask Jeeves.
- **LookSmart (search.looksmart.com)**—LookSmart is a combination directory/search engine, sort of like Yahoo!. You can type a search phrase to search all listings or scroll down the page to browse by category.
- **MSN Search (search.msn.com)**—This is the default search engine for Microsoft’s MSN online service and the search feature of the Internet Explorer web browser. Your search options are the Web, News, Images, Desktop (your own Windows desktop), Encarta (encyclopedia), or Near Me (local businesses and services). You can also choose to search in Spanish or English.
- **Open Directory (www.dmoz.org)**—The Open Directory is the largest directory on the Web, with millions of human-edited listings. The Open Directory is unique in that it’s a public project. Through the collective efforts of thousands of users, the Open Directory can catalog many more sites than can be cataloged by a small staff of paid workers, such as the staff at Yahoo!. In fact, Open Directory powers the directory services of several search engines and portals, including Netscape Search, AOL Search, Google, Lycos, and HotBot.
- **Gigablast (www.gigablast.com)**—Gigablast is a relative newcomer to the search engine party, offering some interesting options that you might not find elsewhere. Like Google, Gigablast opens with a Spartan screen. From this screen, you can search for web pages, browse the directory by category, search for blogs, or search for travel information or government sites. Most of the search tools, when we visited the site, were still in development.

You’ll also find a number of search engines that enable you to search multiple search engines and directories from a single page—which is called a *metasearch*. The top metasearchers include Beaucoup (www.beaucoup.com), CNET’s Search.com (www.search.com), Dogpile (www.dogpile.com),

Mamma (www.mamma.com), MetaCrawler (www.metacrawler.com), and WebCrawler (www.webcrawler.com).

Other Types of Search

While we’re on the topic of professional search sites, you should make note of three other paid search sites. Dialog (www.dialogweb.com), Lexis-Nexis (www.lexisnexis.com/), and ProQuest Direct (www.proquest.com) are all well known and well regarded in the professional research world, and worth your attention if you want results beyond what you can achieve with Google or Yahoo!

If you’d rather not spend any cash, consider searching one of the Internet’s many library-related websites. These sites include both the online arms of traditional libraries and the new generation of completely digital web-based libraries, such as Argus Clearinghouse (www.clearinghouse.net), Berkeley Digital Library SunSITE (sunsite.berkeley.edu), Internet Public Library (www.ipl.org), Library of Congress (www.loc.gov), the New York Public Library Digital Library Collections (www.nypl.org/digital/), and Refdesk.com (www.refdesk.com).

For that matter, several online encyclopedias are good sources for a variety of information. These sites include versions of traditional encyclopedias in addition to completely new web-based encyclopedias, such as Encarta Online (encarta.msn.com), Encyclopaedia Britannica Online (www.britannica.com/), Encyclopedia.com (www.encyclopedia.com), and Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org). Some of these sites require paid subscriptions to access all available content.

If you’re looking for people or places, consider using a dedicated online people finder site. These sites feature directories of phone numbers, street addresses, and email addresses, and include AnyWho (www.anywho.com), Bigfoot (www.bigfoot.com), InfoSpace (www.infospace.com), Switchboard (www.switchboard.com), The Ultimates (www.theultimates.com), WhoWhere (www.whowhere.lycos.com), and Yahoo! People Search (people.yahoo.com).

HOW TO SEARCH

Every search site you visit works in a slightly different way, using a slightly different logic (and technological infrastructure) to perform its search operations. To master the intricacies of every single search site would appear to be an insurmountable task.

Fortunately, some common logic is used in almost all the major search sites. This logic is represented by a series of commands, modifiers, and operators that work in similar fashion across most search engines and directories. If you can master these basic skills, you'll be 80 percent of the way there in mastering each individual site.

Just follow these general steps wherever you choose to search:

1. Start by thinking about what you want to find. What words best describe the information or concept you're looking for? What alternative words might some use? Can you exclude any words from your search to better define your query?
2. Determine *where* you should perform your search. Do you need the power of a Google or the better-qualified results of a Yahoo!? Should you use topic-specific sites rather than these general sites?
3. Construct your query. If at all possible, try to use modifiers and Boolean expressions to better qualify your search. Use as many keywords as you need—the more, the better. If appropriate (and available), use the site's advanced search page or mode.
4. Click the Search button to perform the search.
5. Evaluate the matches on the search results page. If the initial results are not to your liking, refine your query and search again—or switch to a more appropriate search site.
6. Select the matching pages that you want to view and begin clicking through to those pages.
7. Save the information that best meets your needs.

The bottom line? Think more *before* you search and spend more time learning from your results afterward.

FIVE TIPS FOR MORE-EFFECTIVE SEARCHING

Savvy searchers approach their task quite seriously. Smart searching involves more than just entering a few keywords in a Search box; thought needs to be given as to how to construct the query, what words to use, and what operators and modifiers can be used to help narrow the search results.

If you want to improve your search results—both in terms of effectiveness and efficiency—learn from these tips, garnered from search professionals across the Internet.

Tip 1: Think Like the Creators

Websites are created by human beings. That isn't necessarily a good thing because human beings are less than logical—and less than perfect.

To look for information created and managed by a human being, you have to *think* like that human being. Did the person writing about Internet Explorer call it *Internet Explorer* or *Microsoft Internet Explorer* or just *Explorer* or *IE* or *IE6* (including the version number), or was it simply called a *browser* or a *web browser* or even (somewhat incorrectly) a *navigator*? You see, any or all of those words and phrases could have been used to refer to the single thing you thought you were looking for. If all you do is look for *one* of these words or phrases, you could skip right over important information that happened to use a slightly different word or phrase.

The best search engines in the world can't anticipate human beings who use alternative words or (heaven forbid!) use the wrong words by mistake, or even misspell the right words. But you must somehow learn to overcome these human shortcomings if you're to find all the information you want to find.

You have to learn how to think like the people who created and organized the information you're looking for. If you're looking for old plastic model kits, you have to realize that some people call them *kits* and some call them *model kits* and some call them *plastic model kits* and some call them *models* and some call them by name (*Aurora model kits*) and some call them *ready-to-assemble kits* and some even have poor spelling skills and call them *modal kits*.

When you construct your queries, think through all the different ways people refer to the topic you're looking for. Think like the people who put the information together, like the people who create the web pages.

Visualize the results you'd like to find and what they might look like on a web page. Then, and only then, should you construct your query, using the keywords and operators and modifiers you need to return the results you visualized. Master this skill, and you'll almost always find what you want.

Tip 2: Use the Right Words

When you construct your query, you do so by using one or more *keywords*. Keywords are what search engines look for when they process your query. Your keywords are compared to the index or directory of web pages accessible to the search engine; the more keywords found on a web page, the better the match.

Choose keywords that best describe the information you're looking for—using as many keywords as you need. Don't be afraid of using too many keywords; in

fact, using too *few* keywords is a common fault of many novice searchers. The more words you use, the better idea the search engine has of what you're looking for. Think of it as describing something to a friend—the more descriptive you are (that is, the more words you use), the better picture your friend has of what you're talking about.

It's exactly the same way when you "talk" to a search engine.

If you're looking for a thing or place, choose keywords that describe that thing or place, in as much detail as possible. For example, if you're looking for a car, one of your first keywords would, of course, be *car*. But you probably know what general type of car you're looking for—let's say it's a sports car—so you might enhance your query to read **sports car**. You might even know that you want to find a foreign sports car, so you change your query to read **foreign sports car**. And if you're looking for a classic model, your query could be expanded to **classic foreign sports car**. As you can see, the better your description (using more keywords), the better the search engine can "understand" what you're searching for.

If you're looking for a concept or idea, choose keywords that best help people understand that concept or idea. This often means using additional keywords that help to impart the meaning of the concept. Suppose you want to search for information about senior citizens, so your initial query would be **senior citizens**. What other words could you use to describe the concept of senior citizens? How about words such as *elderly*, *old*, or *retired*? If these words help describe your concept, add them to your search, like this: **senior citizens elderly old retired**. Trust me—adding keywords such as these will result in more targeted searches and higher-quality results.

One other point to keep in mind: Think about alternative ways to say what it is that you're looking for. (In other words, think about *synonyms*!) If you're looking for a *car*, you also could be looking for a *vehicle* or an *automobile* or an *auto* or *transportation*. It doesn't take a search guru to realize that searching for **car vehicle automobile auto transportation** will generate more targeted results than simply searching for *car*.

Tip 3: When You Don't Know the Right Words, Use Wildcards

What if you're not quite sure of which word form to use? For example, would the best results come from looking for *auto*, *automobile*, or *automotive*? Many search sites let you use *wildcards* to "stand in" for parts of a word that you're not quite sure about. In most instances, the asterisk character (*) is used as a wild-

card to match any character or group of characters, from its particular position in the word to the end of that word. So, in our preceding example, entering **auto*** would return all three words—*auto*, *automobile*, and *automotive*.

Wildcards are powerful tools to use in your Internet searches. I like to use them when searching for people and I'm not totally sure of their names. For example, if I'm searching for someone whose name might be Sherry or Sheryl or Sherylyn, I just enter **sher*** and I'll get all three names back in my results. To take it even further, if all I know is that the person's name starts with an *s*, I **s***—and get back Sherry and Susan and Samantha as matches.

Wildcards also can return unpredictable results. Suppose you're looking for Monty Python, but you're not sure whether Monty is spelled *Monty* or *Montey*, so you search for **mon***. Unfortunately, this wildcard matches a large number of *mon* words, including *Monty*—and money, monsters, and Mongolia. In other words, if you go too broad on your wildcards, you'll find a lot more than what you were initially looking for.

Tip 4: Modify Your Words with +, -, and "

A *modifier* is a symbol that causes a search engine to do something special with the word directly following the symbol. Three modifiers are used almost universally in the search engine community:

- **+** (always include the following keyword). Use the + modifier when a keyword *must* be included for a match. For example, searching for **+monty +python** will return Monty Python pages or pages about pythons owned by guys named Monty—because any matching page must include both the words, but not necessarily in any order.
- **-** (always *exclude* the following keyword). Use the - modifier when a keyword *must never* be part of a match. For example, searching for **+monty -python** will return pages about guys named Monty but will *not* return pages about Monty Python—because you're *excluding* "python" pages from your results.
- **" "** (always search for the exact phrase within the quotation marks). Use the " " modifier to search for the precise keywords in the prescribed order. For example, searching for **"monty python"** will return pages only about the British comedy troupe Monty Python—you're searching for both the words, in order, right next to each other.

Of these three modifiers, I find quotation marks to be the most useful. Whenever you're searching for an exact phrase, just put it between quotation marks. You'll get more accurate results than if you listed the words individually.

Tip 5: Use OR, AND, and NOT in a Boolean Search

Modifiers are nice, but they're not always the most *flexible* way to modify your query. The preferred parameters for serious online searching are called *Boolean operators*.

Here are the most common Boolean operators you can use at most search sites:

- **OR** (A match must contain *either* of the words to be *true*.)—Searching for **monty OR python** will return pages about guys named Monty or pythons or Monty Python. With an OR search, you're searching for *either* monty *or* python, so both words don't have to appear on the same page together to make a match. The more words connected by OR operators, the less precise your search, but the more matches you'll receive.
- **AND** (A match must contain *both* words to be *true*.)—Searching for **monty AND python** will return Monty Python pages or pages about pythons owned by guys named Monty, but *not* pages that include only one of the two words. The more words connected by AND operators, the more precise your search, and the fewer matches you'll receive. (Remember, however, that in an AND search, you're searching for both the words, but *not necessarily in order*. If you want to search for both words in order, next to each other, search for the exact phrase by putting the phrase inside quotation marks, like this: **"monty python"**.)
- **NOT** (A match must exclude the next word to be *true*.)—Searching for **monty NOT python** will return pages about guys named Monty but will not return pages about Monty Python—because you're excluding *python* pages from your results. (Note that at some search engines, this operator must be used in the form AND NOT.)

True Boolean searching also lets you use parentheses, much like you would in a mathematical equation, to group portions of queries together to create more-complicated searches. For example, let's say you want to search for all pages about balls that are red or blue but not large. The search would look like this:

balls AND (red OR blue) NOT large

There are a handful of other Boolean operators, such as ADJ or NEAR or FAR, that have to do with *adjacency*—how close words are to each other. However, very, very few search engines use these adjacency operators, so you probably won't have much of an opportunity to use them.

Note that not all search sites allow Boolean searching, and even those that do might limit Boolean searching to their advanced search page. For example, Google lets you use the OR operator, but not AND or NOT. (With Google, AND is assumed, and you use *–* rather than NOT. If you want to force Google to include a common word, such as *the* or *how*, you can precede it with the *+* sign.)

In addition, not every search site implements Boolean searching in exactly the same way. For example, some sites use AND NOT rather than the more common NOT operator. Because of these differences, it's a good idea to read the Help files at a search site before you attempt Boolean searching.

A Bonus Tip—Search for Other Places to Search

Here's a sixth tip, at no extra charge. Given that even the biggest search engines index only a fraction of the total Internet, sometimes you have to turn to proprietary sites to find specific data. For example, if you're looking for a recent news story, you're better off searching a newspaper or magazine's online archives than you are trying to find that information at Google or Yahoo!. Or, if you're looking for medical information, you can probably find the information you want faster and easier at one of the many online health sites.

Here's a real-world example. My brother was thinking about buying a new home and wanted to know the original selling price of a particular home in a nearby neighborhood. In the offline world, this information is typically recorded by some county government office and sometimes listed in the local newspaper. It made sense, then, to search these entities online.

The problem is, we didn't know where to search. So, we turned to Google, and searched for **broward county property values**. (My brother lives in Broward County, Florida.) One of the first results was the Broward County Property Appraiser's Network, which enabled my brother to search for properties by street address, owner name, or subdivision. Using this topic-specific site, my brother quickly found the information he was looking for—which he couldn't have found at Google or any of the other generalist search sites.

So, it pays to use your normal search engines to search for more specific directories of information. And the more specific the information you're looking for, the more likely it is you'll have to perform a "double search" in this fashion.

SAFE SEARCHING FOR CHILDREN

If you have children, be sure to monitor their activity on the Internet. Even when kids are not looking for adult content, it can pop up on screen and either upset them or encourage them to explore further. In either case, you, as a parent or guardian, need to be aware of what's going on. You should also encourage your children, especially young children, to use child-safe search directories. These directories enable you to search, but the search returns links to only those sites that are appropriate for kids. Here are some of the better web directories for kids:

- **Yahooligans!** at www.yahooligans.com is the child-friendly version of Yahoo!. Parents and teachers can find useful tips at this site for ensuring their children and students explore the Internet safely.
- **Google Safe Search** at www.google.com/preferences.html enables parents and guardians to set options that filter out most of the undesirable content.
- **Ask Kids** at www.askforkids.com provides a kid-friendly version of Ask, enabling children to type in their questions and find safe answers. This site also features a reference library to help kids with their homework and some safe games to play when they need a break.
- **Education World** at www.education-world.com provides a directory of more than 500,000 resources that are safe for kids to explore. This site is more focused on teachers, but kids can find plenty of good information here.
- **Kids Click** at sunsite.berkeley.edu/KidsClick! is a simple web directory that organizes sites by categories, including Facts & Reference, Health & Family, and Popular Entertainments.

A FINAL WORD ABOUT SEARCHING

You hold in your hands one of the best available guides to the Internet. Que's *Internet Yellow Pages, 2007 Edition* catalogs thousands of the best sites on the Web and is a great first place to look when you're searching for information. I especially like the fact that you can use this book to find the *best* sites in any given category; it's more than a simple site listing. There's a good chance you'll find exactly what you want listed in this book and never have to use a web search engine or directory.

If you do need to use a search site, however, be smart about it. Construct an intelligent and sophisticated query and use the same query on multiple search sites. Examine your results and learn from them to fine-tune your query. Don't limit yourself in where you search or how you search; try new sites and new methods with regularity.

Above all, maintain a sense of curiosity. Don't stop looking with the first page you visit. When you visit a web page, look for links on that page to other pages. Follow those links, and then follow the next set of links. Always be on the lookout for good sources of information, no matter where they might come from. You'll be surprised just how much information you can find, if you're only open to finding it!

Michael Miller is the author of Que's *Absolute Beginner's Guide to eBay*, *Tricks of the eBay Masters*, *Absolute Beginner's Guide to Computer Basics*, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Online Search Secrets*, *Bargain Hunter's Secrets to Online Shopping*, and more than 50 other bestselling how-to books. Mr. Miller is known for his ability to explain complicated subjects to the average consumer; he has established a reputation for practical advice, accuracy, and an unerring empathy for the needs of his readers.

A publishing industry professional since 1987, Mr. Miller is currently president of The Molehill Group, offering writing and consulting services on a variety of topics. You can find more information about Mr. Miller and The Molehill Group at www.molehillgroup.com.

BLOGS, POP-UPS, PODCASTS, AND WEBCASTS

by Joe Kraynak and Mikal Belicove

The Web is constantly evolving, presenting users with new tools, new forms of expression, and new annoyances. Since the first edition of the *Internet Yellow Pages*, the Web has seen the introduction and explosive growth of blogs, easier mobile access via cell phones, and the escalation of unsolicited advertising via pop-up ads. The following sections provide the information you need to keep abreast of the latest, most-significant developments and enhance your web browsing experience by reducing the number of ads that pop up on your screen.

BLOGS ARE WEBSITES, TOO

Short for *web log*, *blogs* are personal and business-related journals that enable individuals to voice their opinions and insights, keep an online journal of their lives or activities, or enable families and other groups and communities to stay in touch. Blogging hosts provide all the tools and instructions a user needs to create a blog and update it in a matter of minutes. This enables even the least tech-savvy web users to establish a presence on the Web.

In section B, look for the Blogging category. We have included a list of blogging hosts that can help you create and manage your own blog, along with a list of blog directories that can help you sift through the thousands of excellent blogs already on the Web.

BLOCKING POP-UPS

The commercialization of the Web has enhanced it a great deal by providing a profit motive that has generated the investment and innovation required to seed its growth. However, it has also inspired some companies to attempt to force-feed unsolicited advertisements to web users. Many of the most annoying ads are in the form of *pop-ups*, ads that automatically appear in separate windows or boxes on your computer screen.

Pop-ups come from two sources:

- Pop-up software and/or spyware that is installed on your computer with or without your knowledge. Some sites automatically install software on your computer that can track your web browsing habits, or they automatically call for pop-ups as you browse. Web users often unwittingly install

adware on their own computers when they install a “free” game or other software from a website on their computers.

- Websites themselves often are programmed to generate pop-ups. You just open the site or click a particular link, and the pop-up appears.

If pop-ups are driving you crazy, you need to attack the problem using two utilities: a spyware remover and a pop-up blocker. You can download two freeware programs on the Web at Tucows (www.tucows.com) that, together, can prevent at least 90 percent of the pop-ups on your computer:

- **Spybot Search and Destroy** removes spyware. Install the software and run it every week or so to remove any spyware installed on your computer. (Ad-aware is another excellent utility, which you can download from www.lavasoft-usa.com.) Research any companies that offer heavily advertised adware or spyware removal utilities before purchasing any of them. They are often scams.
- **12Ghosts Popup Killer** blocks most pop-ups that websites try to automatically display on your screen. The only mild inconvenience this adds is that if you click a link for a site and the link is set up to open in a separate window, 12Ghosts prevents it from opening; to get the window to open, you simply hold down the Ctrl key while clicking. The Google and MSN toolbars and other specialized browser add-on toolbars also offer pop-up blocking.

Many of the newer antivirus programs and Internet security packages, such as Norton Internet Security, have finally begun to treat adware as they have traditionally treated viruses; so if you have an old antivirus program, consider updating it.


TUNING IN TO PODCASTS AND WEBCASTS


With the proliferation of portable audio players, including iPods and MP3 players, has come a proliferation of audio and video broadcasts on the Web. Commonly referred to as *podcasts* or *webcasts*, this content gives users on-demand access to audio or video broadcasts via their portable players. A small utility on the user’s computer typically transfers content from the Web to the player. Users can even subscribe to their favorite sites to be notified of the latest podcasts or webcasts. In Que’s *Internet Yellow Pages*, 2007 Edition, we point out sites that offer podcasts and webcasts by marking these sites with special icons.

Refer to the Podcast category in section P and the Webcast category in section W for sites that feature tools and instructions for creating podcasts and webcasts.


HOW THIS BOOK IS DESIGNED


Here's a quick look at a few structural features designed to help you get the most out of the book.


 **Best** This icon identifies *the* best website in any given category. If you have time to visit only one site in a category, look for the Best of the Best!

 **1 2 3 4 5** Our quality indicator rates sites on a scale of 1 to 5 based on content, appearance, and ease of use. Top sites earn our highest rating of 5, but 3 is the lowest score—our book omits sites that we would consider to be below average.

 **Blog** When you're looking for sites that encourage users to interact and contribute, keep an eye out for the Blog icon. Blogs can function as personal diaries, corporate kiosks, and even political platforms; but to qualify as a blog, they must enable users to provide input.

 With more and more sites broadcasting their content or at least a portion of it with streaming video, we decided to spotlight those sites with a special Webcast icon. Look for the Webcast icon for dynamic audio-visual content.

 iPods and other audio players have revolutionized the way web developers distribute their content. With an iPod or another audio player, you can download audio broadcasts from the Web and carry them with you wherever you go. Look for Podcast icons to locate sites that provide audio-on-the-go content.

 **RSS** RSS stands for Rich Site Summary or Really Simple Syndication. It's a technology that enables web masters and bloggers to include live feeds from their sites that make it easy for readers to stay on top of the site's latest blog or text entries. Many sites now offer RSS feeds, and we highlight those sites with our RSS icon.



Some websites might not provide a lot of quality information on their own but do, instead, point you in the direction of some of the best sites that deal with a particular topic. We draw your attention to these sites with our Directory icon.

Tip: This icon alerts you to valuable insider site-specific tips that can enhance your experience at a particular site.

We also provide several cross-references throughout the book to help you locate websites that might not appear in the category where you first think of looking.

The child-rating icon is designed to help you weed out sites that are inappropriate for children. Look for



Not for kids for sites that include content inappropriate for children (violence, drugs, racism, or adult content).

WARNING:

Although we made every attempt possible to identify sites that children should not visit, ratings are not always reliable. Sometimes, a site will lose the right to use a particular address, and a company will purchase the address and use it for a site that contains content inappropriate for children. In addition, some sites might include links that point to other sites that have unsuitable content. Every parent should monitor his or her child's activity on the Internet and consider using monitoring or censoring software, such as CyberPatrol, to filter out inappropriate content. However, even censoring software is not foolproof.