

USING GOOGLE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SEARCHING THE INTERNET FOR EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

First of all, think of what follows on two levels. On the first level, you're the recipient, the person who's going to be conducting good searches. However, on the second level, you are a teacher. It's reasonable to expect that you may end up sharing much of this information with your own students. Therefore, think about this material from the perspective of a teacher as well as a student. What follows involves the user in logical thought involving literacy: this is EXACTLY what we want for our students. How would you present this material to them?

* Use Google as your search engine (www.google.com). This engine "forces" the search on all terms, resulting in a greater proportion of hits that are really what you're looking for.

* Learn to use Google by visiting the help screens (in Advanced Search/Tips; they're not long)

* If you use AOL, make your connection with AOL, and then load another browser: either Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator. The AOL browser makes it very difficult to conduct effective searches.

* Use hyphens effectively when you have a single search expression (e.g., "American Civil War," "learning disabilities," "video game") that contains more than one word. For example, American Civil War becomes American-Civil-War. This is VERY important in Google, one of the things that, if you do it right, saves you from getting thousands of unrelated hits. Containing a multi-word search term in quotation marks does the same thing.

* A key principle of effective searching is to start broad and then narrow the search by adding additional search expressions. Shoot for what librarians refer to as the "perfect 30" (i.e., only 30 hits resulting from the final form of a search, but all of these hits right on the money.)

* Know that you can combine search terms with the word "and" to NARROW your search. Google interprets any space as being the word "and."

* Know what you can combine search terms with the word "or" to BROADEN your search. However, in Google, "or" has to be capitalized. You should also contain such an expression (i.e., involving OR) in parenthesis.

* Be aware that you can search within a page (e.g., when you get a "hit" on a long page and you can't see where what you were searching for is located on that page). In Microsoft Internet Explorer, hit "Edit," and then "Find (on This Page)." In Netscape Navigator, it's "Edit," and then "Find in Page." (See how similar the major browsers are!)

* Bookmark frequently, but manage your bookmarks. Both Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator allow you to categorize bookmarks by creating folders for them. For

example, you might place all files related to educational technology in an “Ed Tech” folder. (In Microsoft Internet Explorer, bookmarks are called “Favorites.”)

* Ask your media specialist(s) for assistance when you need it!

EXAMPLE: You are interested in learning more about the use of artillery at the Battle of Gettysburg

Example of a good Google search string: **(artillery OR cannon) Battle-of-Gettysburg**

Example of a bad Google search string: **artillery Battle of Gettysburg**