Strategic Searching

Directions

Use the following searching strategies to conduct an effective and efficient online search.

1 **Use multiple, specific, descriptive keywords for narrower results.**

Example:
Searching for *concerts* will lead to a variety of musical events, ticket purchasing opportunities, and tour dates. Searching for *underground hip-hop shows Bay Area* will lead to narrower, location-based results.

2 **If at first you don't succeed, try synonyms.**

If you've tried searching for *rare cats* but haven't found what you are looking for, try searching for *exotic cats*, *rare felines*, or *exotic felines*.

3 **Place quotation marks around specific words or specific phrases you're looking for.**

If you want information on the president's residence, search on "*White House*" rather than *white house*.
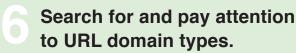
4 **Add a minus sign before a word to show that you don't want that one included.**

If you are searching for mullet but you want the fish and not the hairstyle, you would enter: *mullet -hair*.

5 **Look for two words at once by placing OR between them.**

If you want information on Cornell but you're not sure whether it's a college or a university, search on *Cornell College OR University*. (Note: the OR has to be capitalized!)

6 Search for and pay attention to URL domain types.

.com = company
.gov = government website
.edu = educational institution
.org = organization

If you are searching for parks and you include .gov as a keyword, you should receive government websites in your results. If you are searching for parks and you include .com as a keyword, you should receive results that are companies related to parks.

7 Specify the format of the information you're looking for.

Many search engines will allow you to search exclusively for images, videos, news, blogs, or even scholarly articles. Different types of information will help you in different ways.

If you search for *military service*, the following information will tell you different things:

- **Blogs:** People's opinions about military service.
- **Video:** Videos related to military service. Some might be made by anyone, while others might be created by news outlets, organizations, or the government.
- **News:** The latest news articles and stories related to military service.

8 Use advanced search options on a search engine.

You can often specify dates, exact words you're looking for, or even languages you want in your results in search engines such as Google, Yahoo!, or Bing.

9 Once you have your search results, use them!

Searches enable you to access the huge store of information on the Web, so take some time to see what's out there! Don't just look at the first results, and don't rely only on familiar sources like Wikipedia or About.com.