

The Web Page

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Searching the Internet

With more than a billion Web pages out there, finding what you want on the Internet is not always an easy task. As a browser, it's up to you to learn how to enter search requests in order to limit the results to meaningful and accurate ones.

The World Wide Web is not indexed in a standard vocabulary. Therefore, searching the Web isn't as easy as going to the card catalog at your local library and finding all the books in order by subject. There are basically two kinds of Internet search tools: search engines and directories.

Search engines

A search engine is a place to go if you are looking for particular words, answers to questions or tidbits of information. Examples of search engines are Google (www.google.com), AltaVista (www.altavista.com), Northern Light (www.northernlight.com) and Lycos (www.lycos.com). Search engines have automatic software "robots" or "spiders" that search for words instead of subjects. They obtain new pages, update known pages and delete obsolete ones,

helping to keep the search-engine database up-to-date.

A special type of search engine is a meta-search engine. It automatically submits your keyword search to several other search tools and retrieves results from all their databases. Examples of this type of search engine are Dogpile (www.dogpile.com) and Metacrawler (www.metacrawler.com).

The best tip to using a search engine is to read the directions before entering a search. Every search service has tips or tricks and detailed information about how to find the information you seek.

Directories

Directories group Web pages into subject categories. The most efficient way to use a directory is to start with a topic and click your way through various categories until you find what you want. A sample of a directory is Yahoo (www.yahoo.com).

Use a directory when you want to find entire Web sites about a particular topic or when you know you can find your information within a particular site.

Search definitions

Boolean logic: a way to combine terms using "operators," such as *AND*, *OR*, *AND NOT* and (sometimes) *NEAR*. *AND* requires all terms appear in a record. *OR* retrieves records with either term. *AND NOT* excludes terms. Parentheses may be used to sequence operations and to group words. Always enclose terms joined by *OR* with parentheses.

Case-sensitive: Capital (uppercase) letters retrieve only capital letters. Most search tools are not case-sensitive or only respond to initial capitals, as in proper names. It is always safe to key all lowercase letters (no capitals) because lowercase always will retrieve uppercase.

Field searching: the ability to limit a search by requiring a word or phrase to appear in a specific field — title, URL, link — of documents.

Fuzzy and: In rankings of results, documents with all terms (Boolean *AND*) are ranked first, followed by documents containing any terms (Boolean *OR*). The farther down, the fewer the terms, although at least one always should be present.

Keywords: words specified in a search command. Keywords are searched in any order. Use spaces to separate keywords in simple keyword searching. To search keywords exactly as keyed (in the same order), see *phrase*.

Limiting to a field: requiring that a keyword or phrase appear in a specific field of documents retrieved. This is most often used to limit to the "title" field to find documents primarily about one or more keywords. (Limiting also can be used for other fields.)

Phrase: more than one keyword, searched exactly as keyed (all

terms required to be in the documents, in the order keyed). Enclosing keywords in quotation marks forms a phrase in AltaVista, Infoseek and some other search tools. Sometimes a phrase is called a *character string*. Insert a plus sign immediately before a phrase (no space) to limit the search to documents containing a phrase. Insert a minus sign (-) immediately before a phrase (no space) to exclude documents containing a phrase.

Stemming: In keyword searching, word endings are automatically removed (*bulls* becomes *bull*); searches are performed on the stem, plus common endings (*producer* or *producers* retrieves *producer*, *producers* and *producer's*). This usually can be avoided by placing a term in quotation marks.

Stop words: In database searching, stop words are small and frequently occurring words — *and*, *or*, *in*, *of* — that often are ignored when keyed as search terms. Sometimes putting them in quotation marks will allow you to search for them. Sometimes, a plus sign immediately before them makes them searchable.

Subsearching: the ability to search only within the results of a previous search. This enables you to refine search results, in effect making the computer "read" the search results for you, selecting documents with the terms in your subsearch.

Truncation: in a search, the ability to enter the first part of a keyword, to insert a symbol (usually an asterisk), and to accept any variant spellings or word endings from the occurrence of the symbol forward. (For example, *agricultur** retrieves *agriculture*, *agriculturist* and *agricultural*.)

Getting results

Searching the Internet effectively requires knowledge of search definitions (see sidebar).

The University of California, Berkeley, recommends the following five-step search strategy:

Step 1. Analyze your topic to decide where to begin.

Does your topic ...

- have distinctive words or phrases?
- lack distinctive words or phrases? You have only common or general terms that get the “wrong” pages.
- seek an overview or cover a broad topic?
- specify a narrow aspect of a broad or common topic?
- have synonymous, equivalent terms, or variant spellings or endings that need to be included?
- have you a little confused? In other words, you don’t know much about it yet.

Step 2. Pick the right starting place.

If you are searching for a distinctive word or phrase, enclose phrases in quotation marks (“”). Test-run your word or phrase in Google or a meta-search engine.

If it is not a distinctive word or phrase, you may need to enter a search with more than one term using *and* or a plus sign (+) between terms. If that doesn’t work, you can look for distinctive terms in a guide.

Step 3. Learn as you go, and vary your approach with what you learn.

Step 4. Don’t bog down in any strategy that doesn’t work.

Step 5. Return to previous strategies better informed.

Searching www.angusjournal.com

If you’re looking for articles previously printed in the *Angus Journal* or the *Angus Beef Bulletin*, you can go to www.angusjournal.com or www.angusbeefbulletin.com and click on the “back issues” links.

You can search by keyword or by issue date. For example, if you want all the articles printed about calving, you can enter *calving* in the keyword-search field. You’ll get back more than 50 articles. Before the article name is a percentage, which represents the relevance. If you want to target your results to information about calving out heifers, you can enter *calving* and *heifers*. With that search, you’ll get 11 results.

Once you narrow the results, you can click on the article title to download the portable document format (pdf) file for viewing. You will need Adobe Acrobat® Reader™ to view the articles. If you don’t have Reader installed on your computer, click the “Get Acrobat Reader” button to download a free copy of the software.

We are still in the process of archiving past issues of the *Journal*. All of the 1999 and 2000 issues are active, plus January 1997 to June-July 1997.

Upcoming Web Marketing workshops

Plan to attend the Web Marketing workshop at the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE). The workshop will highlight the services provided by the Web Marketing Department, including Web design, Web hosting, online sale books, Angus e-Classifieds and banner advertising.

Also look for “realistic-time” coverage of the American Royal (www.angusjournal.com/royal) and the NAILE (www.angusjournal.com/louisville). You also can see highlights of the National Angus Conference and Tour at www.angusjournal.com/nationalconference.

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