

# 9 Secrets To Finding *Relevant* Information Online

Have you ever run into a virtual wall when searching for information on the Internet? With billions of websites online, finding good, relevant information online can sometimes be akin to finding a needle in a haystack.

But take heart! Here are 9 little-known secrets that will help you find what you are looking for in no time at all.

## 1. Use the “Advanced Search” tool

Almost all search engines have an "advanced search" tool that will provide you with more options for filtering information and websites. This will help you narrow down your search and eliminate irrelevant, off-topic websites.

## 2. Search with a phrase in quotations

Putting quotations around a phrase will tell the search engine to look for that exact phrase or name instead of each individual word. For example, if you were looking for a chocolate cake recipe, type “chocolate cake recipe” in the search window with the quotes around it. If you left the quotations off, you might get recipes for other cakes or chocolate candy in general because the search engine will look up the words separately: chocolate cake recipe

## 3. Use synonyms

If your search does not produce the results you want, try synonyms. For example, a dog is also a pet, canine, mutt, pooch, and man’s best friend. Use your Microsoft Word thesaurus tool or Merriam-Webster OnLine to find synonyms for your search term.

## 4. Use AND (+), OR, NOT(-) logic

Use Boolean logic between words to narrow your search. For example **plastics + manufacturing** delivers results where both words appear somewhere on the page, but in no particular order.

## 5. Use “database” or “list of links” or “membership list”

When you’re looking for a list of company names or industry sources enter database or “list of links” + “plastics manufacturing” to return lists related to the plastics manufacturing industry.

## 6. Use a plus or minus sign

This trick will allow you to narrow down a larger category. If you were looking for a roadside café in Vancouver, you would type in “roadside café + Vancouver”. This will allow you to search on a specific set of keywords that might not be strung together in one phrase as mentioned in tip #2.

This also works in reverse with a minus sign (-). If you wanted to find all roadside cafes that were NOT in Vancouver, you would type in “roadside café - Vancouver”.

## **7. Just search the domain name**

If you know the website you want but can't seem to find the information you are looking for, you can tell the search engine to search for a specific keyword or phrase within that site. Simply enter the search term you are looking for followed by the word "site" and a colon, and then by the domain name.

For example, if you wanted to find information on spam filter updates for Microsoft Outlook, enter this: spam filter update site:www.microsoft.com

## **8. Eliminate inappropriate content**

To eliminate adult sites clogging your search results, simply activate your favorite web browser's adult filter setting. MSN has a SafeSearch option on its settings page and Google's can be found in their advanced search option. It's not 100% accurate but it will eliminate the most obvious sexually explicit websites from your search.

## **9. Use your search engine's categories**

Many search engines offer specialized areas such as news, video, audio, pictures, local, and shopping related categories. If you know you are looking for a picture, choose the appropriate category and your chances of finding what you want increase significantly.

These are but a few examples of how you can easily find relevant information online. Call us if you would like to know more about refining your search.

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