

Power Searching White Paper

Have you ever found yourself overwhelmed with the results of a search engine query? Do you consistently find that your attempts to locate information using a web site search engine are ineffective?

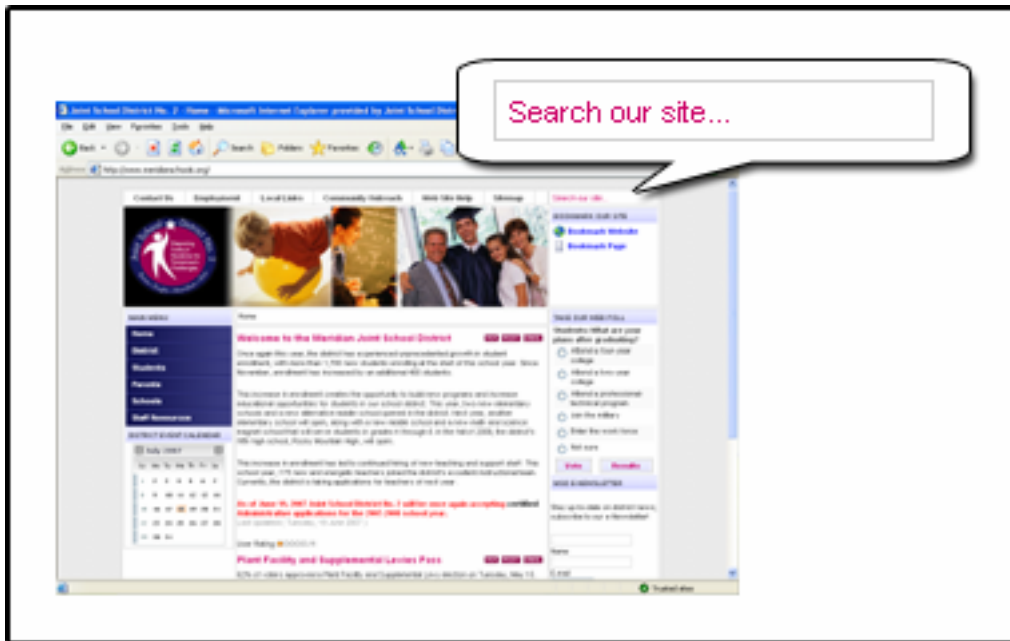
If so, then this white paper on using search engines effectively will help you become a power searching guru. Are you ready for more good news? It's not complicated, and you don't have to be a "computer expert" to do it.

Take the time to read through this document then put its suggested techniques to practice. You'll be surprised by how much more productive you can be. It really is that easy.

The search feature available on many district-hosted web sites is illustrated in Figure 1 below. It functions like a traditional "search engine" web site; therefore it supports all of the techniques explained in this white paper.

To execute the search, press the Enter key on your keyboard after typing the search phrase of interest.

Figure 1



Now let's jump into the specific techniques that will make you an Internet search wizard.

Technique #1: Exact Match Search

This method involves searching for results that contain an exact phrase by using quotation marks. Using quotes tells the search engine to display only those results that contain all the words in your search phrase together in the order specified. Exact match searching helps restrict the results to specifically what you're looking for.

Here's an example to illustrate this type of search:

- You go to Google and do a search for "auto repair shop."
- Since you enclosed your search phrase in quotes, only sites that have the exact phrase contained in the text of a page will be listed.

While exact match searching is effective, even this method has its drawbacks; in many cases it is still not specific enough.

The following scenario illustrates the point:

What good does an auto repair shop in Seattle, Washington do you if you live in Austin, Texas? Exactly; it's not helpful at all. Or, let's say you'd searched for "Ford Explorer accessories," but your Explorer was the 1995 Eddie Baugher edition? Only those listings would be relevant, because auto parts and accessories can vary greatly from one model year or type to another.

If your search is of a general nature then exact match searching will work fine, but if you need to get more specific there is an even better way to search on the web.

Technique #2: Boolean Search

The Boolean search method is by far the most specific and effective way to find exactly what you're looking for. Boolean searches use qualifiers (also called operators) to filter and group the results into a specific set of criteria. This method is especially effective for regional searches, and it's also helpful when you want to screen out certain words. It consistently yields the most accurate results when searching, and eliminates irrelevant pages.

Now let's talk about the specific options available when using Boolean search techniques.

AND

The operator AND pares down search results by combining terms and listing all pages that contain both of the words specified. For example, if you wanted to locate information on deer hunting, you would search for **hunting AND deer**. Only the web pages containing the words **hunting** and **deer** would be displayed. You can use more than two keywords when searching with the AND operator to be even more specific or inclusive. For example, if you wanted to add elk to the results, you could search using **"hunting AND deer AND elk"** to locate information on **deer and elk hunting**.

OR

The operator OR widens a search to include results that contain any of the keywords specified. For example, if you wanted to find information about snorkeling or scuba diving, you would search for **snorkeling OR "scuba diving"**. The search engine would return results for any web pages in its database containing the word **snorkeling** as well as those with the phrase **scuba diving**.

NOT

The operator NOT helps refine a search by eliminating unwanted conditions. This method is especially helpful when you want to start with a broad category and remove a certain subset of information. For example, if you wanted to find information about movies but were not interested in the horror genre, you would search for **"movies NOT horror."**

+/-

The "+" and "-" characters can be substituted for the AND and NOT operators, respectively; just be sure to **NOT** use spaces before the word or phrase you want to qualify. For example, if you wanted to search for vegetarian recipes that are organic and don't contain carrots, you might try searching for **"vegetarian recipes" +organic -carrots**.

"PIPE" (|)

The "|" character, called a pipe, is located above the Enter key on your keyboard and is accessed in combination with the Shift key. The pipe is a powerful operator that can be used to filter results from general subjects to more specific ones. For example, if you wanted to find sports cars from 1970 you could search for **"sports cars"|1970**.

You needn't restrict yourself to using only one pipe, either. By combining two or more you can get very granular and relevant results while weeding out web pages that aren't relevant. An example search which uses this tactic is **"comic books"|"golden age"|batman**.



That's all there is to it; give these techniques a try and watch your web site searching sessions become surprisingly effective!