

Glossary of Internet Searching Terms

Boolean Operators: Boolean operators, named after mathematician and logistician, George Boole, include the expressions AND, OR, and NOT. These expressions can be used to expand or narrow a search (see examples below).

The “AND” expression narrows a search by requiring a web page to have both terms

camping AND wisconsin

chocolate chip cookies AND midwest express

The “OR” expression expands the search so that pages retrieved may have either terms

ms OR multiple sclerosis

cats OR felines

While the “NOT” expression seeks to exclude an element from the search

bears NOT chicago

jurassic NOT park

Dead Link: An Internet link that does not lead to a page or site. A user may notice an error message. Sometimes no error message displays yet no page is loaded within the web browser. This may happen for a number of reasons such as the server storing the site is down, the page has moved, or the page no longer exists. Most search engines have techniques for removing such pages from their listings automatically. However, because the Internet is continuously growing, it becomes more and more difficult for a search engine to check all the pages in the index regularly.

Directory: Directories allow you to browse the web by a number of subjects such as travel, computers, and weather. Directories also allow you to search the web by entering in a specific subject. *Yahoo!* is perhaps one of the most popular directories.

Document: The unit of information the user is seeking and wants to retrieve. A document could be a web page, an image, newsgroup or email posting, or text file.

Hits: *Hits* refer to the number of web sites that display after performing a search.

Index: The term Index takes on a different meaning in the context of search engines. The term index and search engine are sometimes used synonymously. The index can be thought of as the searchable catalog of documents created by search engine software. An index may be full-text, meaning it contains every word on the page or it may be specific areas of the page (e.g. title, first few pages, and first few paragraphs).

Meta Search Engine: A meta search engine allows you to perform searches using multiple search engines. Examples of meta search engines include *Dogpile* and *Metacrawler*.

Phrase Search: If you are searching for a phrase (e.g. Lake Michigan or chocolate chip cookies), include quotation marks around it. *Phrase searching* allows you to narrow your search. Some search engines may use parentheses rather than quotation marks or there may be a special option to check.

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PIN: Personal Identification number. By establishing a PIN, you can place holds on items and access Electronic databases remotely from your home computer.

Query: A query is simply a search statement made up of terms or phrases. Operators can be used to refine the search.

Ranking: Ranking or sometimes referred to as positioning involves ordering web sites or web pages in a results list so that the most relevant hits appear first. Each search engine uses its own formula in determining relevancy and therefore the same search in two different search engines may yield some of the same hits, however they may be ordered differently.

Search Engine: A tool that lets you locate information on the web by browsing subjects or entering a query, keyword or phrase. The search engine locates pages within its database that match the keyword or phrase specified. The results are displayed in list format, and are usually referred to as “hits.” The search engine’s database is created by a computer program sometimes called a spider or robot, which is sent out to “grab” as many pages as possible. Once the pages have been gathered, a second program, usually referred to as an Indexer, creates an index of words from different web pages. Examples of search engines include *Google*, *Altavista*, and *HotBot*.

Traffic: The visitors to a web page or web site. Also refers to the number of visitors, hits, accesses etc. over a given period of time.

Truncate: Allows a user to search for the root of a word and retrieve all of its variant spellings or endings. The most popular symbols to truncate are the asterisk (*) or the question mark (?). For example searching for *motorcycl** will locate web sites that have the terms *motorcycle*, *motorcycles*, *motorcycling*, and *motorcyclists*. And a search for *wom?n* will search for both woman or women. Some search engines will automatically truncate.

Venn Diagram: Named after John Venn. The Venn diagrams below provide a graphic illustration of the Boolean operators used to narrow and expand searches.

