

## How research for assignments using the Internet

### Before you begin searching

#### Choose your keywords

For example, you have been asked to find information on the effect of smoking on health.

The two key words are **smoking** and **health**.

These are the words you will use to search for information on the Internet. You don't need to write a whole sentence or include words like 'the'.

#### Think of some alternative keywords

For example, you have been asked to find out about equality for women in the uniformed services.

Your keywords would be **equality**, **women**, and **uniformed services**.

You could also try 'gender' instead of women and you could try 'army', 'police service' or 'fire service' instead of uniformed services.

#### Place phrases in quotation marks

For example, you have been asked to search for information on the Great Wall of China.

If you place the phrase in quotation marks like this: "Great Wall of China" your search results will be more accurate as only sites which mention the whole phrase will appear.

#### Check your spelling

Make sure you have spelled your keywords correctly, especially if you are searching for information on a person or a place.

- Use several words, not just 1 or 2, to make your search more focused.
- Put your main keyword first – some search tools use this to rank the results
- Consider alternative spellings, e.g. organisation / organization
- Try using truncation if you want to find words with the same beginning but different endings, e.g. computer\* will find computer, computers, computing
- Use the search engine's advanced search option

## Choosing your search engine

There are lots of search engines to choose from. The big four general search engines are:

**Google** ([www.google.co.uk](http://www.google.co.uk)) You can improve your Google search technique – click on 'About Google' at the bottom of the screen and then 'Web search features' to read about ways of making your searches more effective.

**Ask** (Also known as Ask Jeeves) (<http://uk.ask.com>)

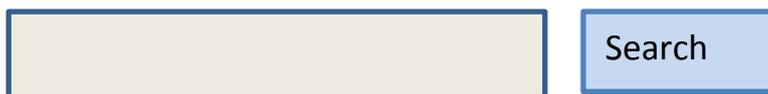
**Bing** ([www.bing.com](http://www.bing.com)) Click on the 'only from United Kingdom' button to restrict your results to pages from this country.

**Yahoo** (<http://uk.yahoo.com>)

For more academic articles use Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.co.uk/>)

### Using a search engine

You will see a box where you type your keywords and a 'Search' button which you click on to start the search:



There are billions of pages published on the Internet. A search engine will trawl through them and produce a list of results with the highest results usually being the most relevant. However, some search engines e.g. Google put "sponsored links" at the top of every list of results and these might not be relevant. Read the words under the result title, they will help you decide if the site is going to be useful or not. If you are not satisfied with the results try adding more or alternative keywords.

- If you are getting results that are not relevant use the minus symbol to exclude words, e.g. jaguar –car –automobile will help you find sites about the animal rather than the car.
- You will often see sponsored links usually to the right hand side of the webpage. These are often trying to sell you something but they can sometimes have useful information.
- Consider asking for information – email or put a question on a forum or discussion board. Remember to be polite, keep it short and don't ask for information which you could easily find yourself.
- Blogs are also a useful source of information. You can use [www.google.com/blogsearch](http://www.google.com/blogsearch) to find relevant ones.

### General tips

- Be clear about what you are searching for. The search engine doesn't know your assignment! It just looks for your search terms.
- Many websites have **Help** pages. Check these for searching tips.
- Lost your way? Click on the **History** button on your browser to see which sites you have visited.
- On a long webpage use **Find** to get to the relevant words quickly.
- Use more than one source to check facts and get different opinions. If you use information from a website keep a record of the web address for your list of references.
- As you search, ask yourself questions to help you keep focused. Decide how much information you need. At some point you need to stop searching and start writing!

## LRC E-resources

There is lots of useful information on the Internet which you won't find by using a search engine. The LRC pays a subscription to access some of these resources. You can use them for free by visiting the [e-library](#) section of our website.

You will find:

- Newspaper articles
- Journal articles
- Information on issues such as animal rights, drugs, crime.
- e-books
- Encyclopaedias

## Useful websites

The Library website has a [Web Links](#) section. Visit your subject in this section to see a list of websites we have chosen because they are useful for your course.

## Evaluating websites

Once you have found a site you need to decide whether it is going to be useful or not. We have written a guide on this subject which is also available in the **i-skills** section of the Library website.