

Boolean Search - this is easier than it looks/sounds

Occasionally, when searching for something online (at google.com), you have a specific topic you are looking for, i.e. The name of the bill creating the tariff board during the early 1900s...

You may be seeing page after page of result of, in this instance, William McKinley or the Revenue Act or the history of William Taft - which is NOT what you are looking for.

You can use “Boolean” logic to help define the search as a phrase PLUS another term and NOT a term and NOT a phrase, i.e.

“tariff board” creation -McKinley -”Revenue Act”

Unpacking this turns out to be:

- the exact phrase “tariff board” in the article
- articles that include the word “creation”
- no articles about “McKinley”
- no articles about the “Revenue Act”

That first page should show the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act - which is what we were looking for - and that passed in 1909, part of which was the establishment of the Tariff Board.

There are lots of options with Boolean searches, a cool one being searching within a site you know the content is on, but don't know what page it's on

- Term `site:websitename.com`
- “Phrase here” `site:websitename.com`

When you search using an operator, don't add any spaces between the operator and your query. A search for `site:nytimes.com` will work, but `site: nytimes.com` will not.

The following is a list of Boolean logic for you to play with when you have extra time OR are so frustrated looking up something and getting something else that you're ready to call it quits.

Search for a phrase, exclude words, exclude phrases

Use quotes to search for an exact word or set of words on a web page. This is helpful when searching for song lyrics or a line from a book. But only use this if you're looking for an exact word or phrase, otherwise you'll exclude many helpful results by mistake.

“imagine all the people”

Exclude a word

-word

Exclude a phrase

-"word phrase"

Search within a known site or type of site (.gov)

Get results only from certain sites or domains. For example, you can find all mentions of “olympics” on the NBC website, or any .gov websites.

`olympics site:nbc.com`

`olympics site:.gov`

Search for links back to a page

`link:yourwebsite.com`

Use a Wildcard

Add an asterisk within a search as a placeholder for any unknown or wildcard terms. Use with quotation marks to find variations of that exact phrase or to remember words in the middle of a phrase.

“a * saved is a * earned”

Use “OR” when unsure of several terms

OR

If you want to search for pages that may have just one of several words, include OR (capitalized) between the words. Without the OR, your results would typically show only pages that match both terms.

`world cup location 2014 OR 2018 OR 2022`

Search for a number range

Separate numbers by two periods without spaces (..) to see results that contain numbers in a given range of things like dates, prices, and measurements.

`camera $50..$100`

which combining a couple of things turns into

“Nikon 7100” `$500..$1000 site:camerasite.com`

searches for this camera in this price range on this site.

Lastly, Google has a tool to help you:

http://www.google.com/advanced_search

I hope this helps you find what you're looking for, not to be too philosophical about it all.

