

Lesson 7: Online Research and Citizenship

Lesson Objectives

In this lesson you will learn how to conduct and evaluate research online, and how to practice good online citizenship. On completion you will be familiar with:

- ☐ how to use a search engine
- ☐ how to search from the Address bar
- ☐ where to find online information
- ☐ how to evaluate information
- ☐ how to avoid bullying
- ☐ how to be a good online citizen
- ☐ how to follow good communication standards

Finding Information

IC3 Objective 3-1.2, 3-5.1

Millions and millions of pages of information are out there on the Internet, just waiting to be found and read. You probably could not think of a topic that no one has written about and made available on a web server *somewhere*.

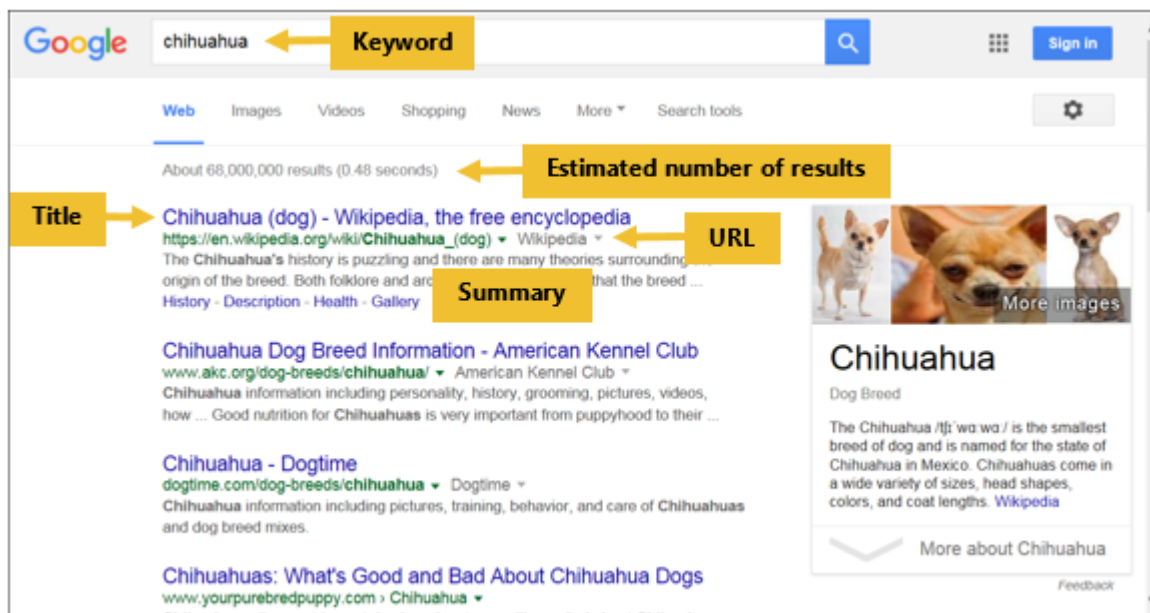
But, how do you find what you are looking for? How could you possibly know which web pages contain the information you need?

That's where search engines come in.

About Search Engines

A *search engine* is a program that searches for and finds items on the Internet that correspond to keywords you specify. A *keyword* is text that you enter into a search engine's search field; the engine then finds and lists web pages that include your keyword.

In the following figure, the word "chihuahua" was entered as a keyword, and the Google search engine found and listed about 68,000,000 results.



Usually, the results page shows a short, descriptive title, the URL of the web page, and either a summary or the first several words of text included on the web page.

All the result titles are links; simply click a title in the results list to visit the web page.

Not all search engines indicate the number of results returned.

Things to Know about the Results Page

Search engines rank the URLs shown on the results page by how closely the information they contain matches the keyword you entered in the search field. The pages that the engine determines are the “best” matches appear at the top of the list.

In search engine technology, this is called ranking pages according to their relevance.

You may find what you are looking for in the first five links on the search results page; but remember, when there are millions of URLs returned, you might want to check out a few links on page 2 or page 3 of the search results as well.

Why is This Page in My Search Results?

When a search engine finds your keyword in a web page, it identifies that page as a match. However, web site designers can (and often do) hide keywords into parts of a web page that do not display in your browser. They do this so that their pages appear in search results – when pages appear in search results, people click the link and visit the page – so appearing in search results can be “good for business.”

Did You Know?

In some circles, this practice is called “spamdexing” – sending “spam” or “junk information” to the search engine in order to appear near the top of a search results page.

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For this reason, you may find pages in your search results that have nothing to do with the topic you are researching. You may not even be able to find your keyword mentioned anywhere on the web page. This does not happen very often, because search engine companies make every effort to provide good, relevant results, but it does happen once in a while.

Using a Search Engine

There are many search engines to choose from. Google, Bing, Yahoo!, Ask, AOL, Blekko, and ChaCha are just some of the popular search engines in use today. The basic steps of searching for content are pretty much the same from one engine to another.

1. Navigate to the search engine page.
2. Enter your keyword or keywords in the search box and press **Enter**.

3. Look through the list of returned URLs and click the links to find the information you need.

Narrowing Your Search

Typically, a search engine returns millions of results. To search effectively, you should understand how to narrow your results to find the information you want.

We will be describing techniques that you can use in the Google search engine. If the search engine you are using does not recognize the operators listed below, it will ignore them and you may get unexpected results.

Here's a Tip:

Not all search engines use search-narrowing operators in the same way.

To narrow your search results in Google:

- Choose specific key words. Entering *punk music* will show fewer results than entering *music*.
- Put quotation marks around a phrase or a group of words to force the engine to look for occurrences of those words together rather than searching for each of those words individually. Entering "*American groups*" will show fewer results than typing *American groups*.
- Use AND to connect keywords when you want to find pages that contain multiple keywords in a single document. For example, enter "*punk music*" AND "*American groups*", to find pages that include American punk bands. (Many search engines interpret a space between keywords as an implied AND; and others allow you to use a plus sign (+) to connect keywords.)
- Use OR to connect keywords when you want to find pages that contain one or another of your keywords. This is helpful when a particular subject might be found using different keywords. For example, the company IBM is nicknamed "Big Blue"; entering "*Big Blue*" OR "*IBM*" will return all results on IBM even if in some places it is referred to only by its nickname.

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- Use the dash (-) before a word to exclude pages that contain that word from your search results. Enter *composer -Beethoven*, to find pages about composers other than Beethoven. (In some search engines you can use the NOT operator to exclude a keyword, but in Google, you must use the dash.)



Try It! Exercise

In this exercise, you will use the Google search engine.

1. Open the Internet Explorer browser.
2. Click in the address bar, type: www.google.com and press **Enter**. The Google page displays. The cursor should already be positioned in the search field.
3. In the search field, type: *unusual foods of the world* and press **Enter**.
4. When the results display, look at the top of the window (above the results) and write down the estimated number of URLs that were returned. _____. Did you get millions of results?

Let's narrow the search.

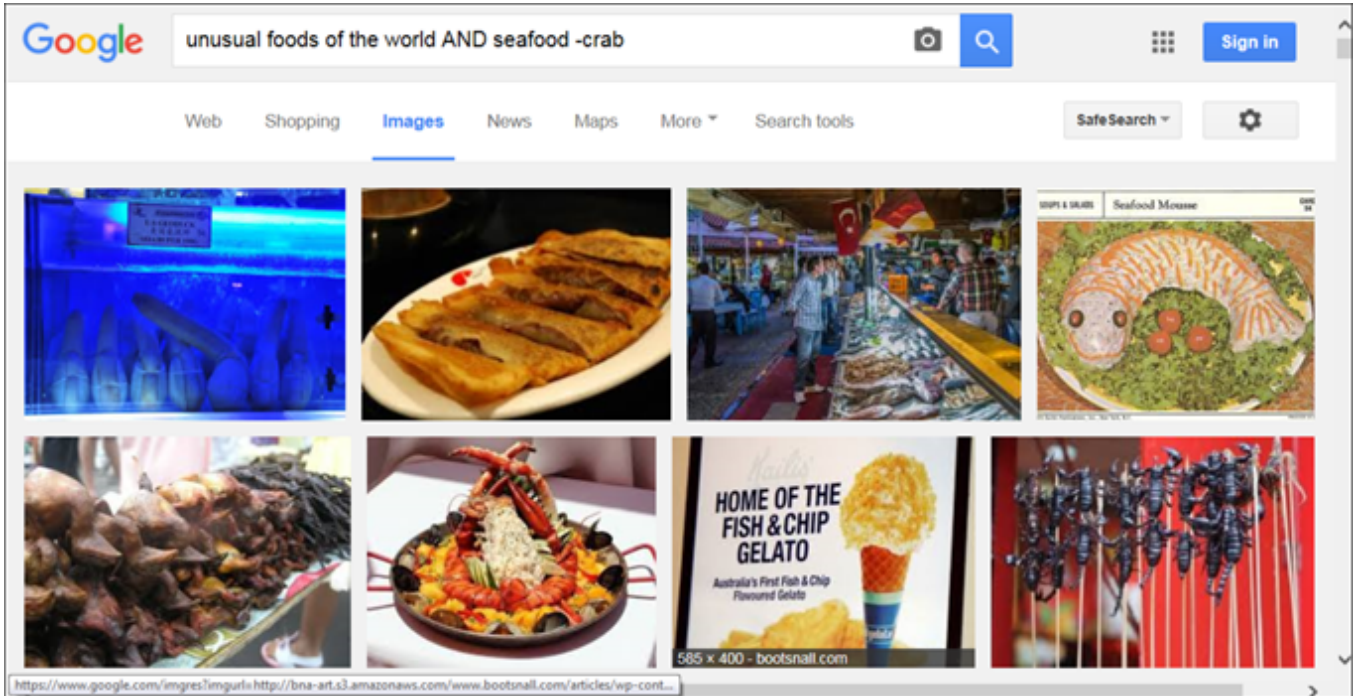
5. In the search box, click to the right of the current keywords, press **Spacebar** then type: AND *seafood*, and press **Enter**. You are specifying you only want to see pages about unusual seafood dishes. Did you get fewer results this time?

Let's narrow it some more.

6. In the search box, click to the right of the current keywords, press **Spacebar** type: **-crab** and press **Enter**. Now you are specifying to exclude dishes that contain crab. Did you get even fewer results?

Suppose you want to find images of unusual seafood dishes.

7. At the top of the window, click the **Images** link. Now the results page includes only images.



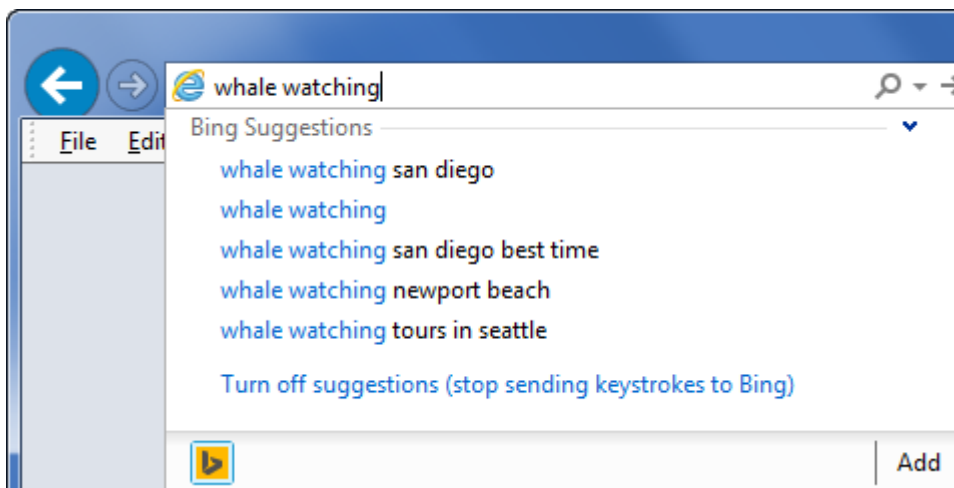
8. Close the browser.

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Searching from the Address Bar

You can navigate to a search engine site to find information, or you can search right from the address bar. Searching from the address bar is just like searching from a search engine page.

In Internet Explorer, click in the address bar and start typing. If you enter a complete URL, you will go directly to the web site. If you type a search term or an incomplete address, a list of suggested search terms appears in a menu.



Click a suggested search term in the menu to launch a search using the currently selected search engine.

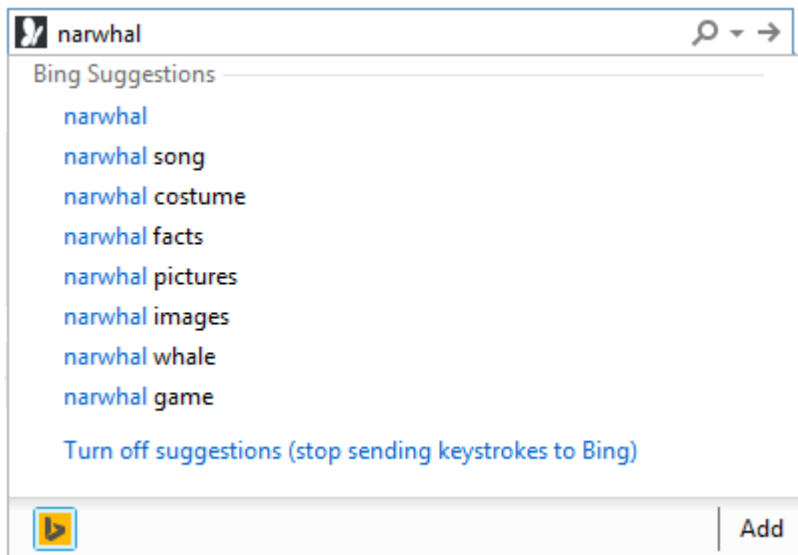
In Internet Explorer, the Turn on suggestions feature is enabled by default. You can click **Turn off suggestions (stop sending keystrokes to Bing)** to turn off the feature.

In Internet Explorer, address bar search is linked to Bing, but you can click the **Add** button at the bottom of the menu to add search providers (such as Google or Yahoo) from the Internet Explorer Gallery web site.

Try It! Exercise

In this exercise you will search from the address bar.

1. Open the Internet Explorer browser.
2. Click in the address bar, then type: **narwhal**. Look at the list box that displays beneath the address bar. (If *Turn on suggestions (send keystrokes to Bing)* displays in the list box, click the link to display suggested search terms in the list box.)



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3. In the list of Bing suggestions, click **narwhal** to display the first page of search results. Did the search retrieve millions of suggestions?
4. In the search box, click to the right of the current keyword, press **Spacebar** type: **sounds** and press **Enter**. Now you are specifying find pages that contain the words “narwhal” and “sounds.” Remember that in many search engines, a space is an implied AND. Did you get fewer results?
5. In the search box, click to the right of the current keywords, press **Spacebar** type: **-song** and press **Enter**. Now you are specifying to exclude pages about the “narwhal song.” Did you get even fewer results?

Let's start a new search.

6. Select all the text in the search box, and press **Delete**.
7. In the search box, type: **narwhal migration** and press **Enter**.
Using more specific keywords gives a more manageable number of results. Did you get a few hundred thousand results?
8. Click in the address bar, and add quotation marks (") around the keywords. The text in the search box should read: “narwhal migration”. Searching for an exact phrase should narrow down the results even more.
9. Press **Enter**.
How many results did you get this time?
10. Close the browser.

Other Places to Find Online Information

IC3 Objective 3-1.2, 3-5.1

In addition to using search engines, you can search for information directly on various types of web sites, including:

- **Wiki sites** – are like online encyclopedias. People who are knowledgeable about a particular topic create pages on a wiki site, and other knowledgeable people can update the pages and add more content. Perhaps

the most famous wiki site is Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.com).

- **Blogs** – many individuals maintain special interest blogs where they post articles, photos and information about a particular topic.
- **YouTube** – if you are looking for information on how to accomplish a specific task, there is a good chance that you will find tutorials and video demonstrations on YouTube.com.
- **Educational sites** – web sites that are maintained by schools and universities have a domain that ends in .edu. These sites usually contain accurate information on wide variety of topics.

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