Basic Internet Skills Series

An Introduction to SEARCHING & SECURITY

Schenectady County Public Library
99 Clinton Street, Schenectady, NY 12305
Visit us at SCPL.ORG

Internet Basics: SEARCHING

The Internet: a global network of computers allowing millions of people to share information.

Getting to the Internet:
BROWSERS

A browser is a software application used to locate and display web pages. The most popular browsers are INTERNET EXPLORER (Microsoft), FIREFOX (Mozilla), CHROME (Google) and EDGE (Microsoft).

WEB ADDRESSES
Every document on the web has an address called the URL (Uniform Resource Locator).

The URL to locate GOOGLE is: **http://www.google.com**

http:// or https://   (hypertext transfer protocol) identifies the document as a web page. You do not need to enter this part. The "s" indicates a "secure" version with added encryption.

Encryption is the process of encoding messages or information in such a way that only authorized parties can read it. Banks and other institutions that require personal information will add a further layer or "lock" to protect the data.

www.   WORLD WIDE WEB (not always required). The period ("dot") must be included.

google   HOST or owner of the website (company, school, person, hospital, library, etc.)

.com   DOMAIN NAME
            Other domains include
            - **.edu** - Educational institutions
            - **.org** - Organizations (some are nonprofit)
            - **.gov** - Government agencies
            - **.mil** - Military branches
            - **.com** - commercial businesses
            - **.net** - networks
            - **.ca** - Canada / **.uk** - United Kingdom / **.de** - Germany

        ✓ There are never spaces in a web address (URL).
        ✓ URLs can be of varying lengths.
        ✓ Longer URLs indicate you are moving deeper into a website, especially as you see more slash marks (//).

SEARCH ENGINES

Search engines are web sites that allow you to type in a few key words and then present you with a list of possible links that might have the information you want.

Google	google.com	Excite	excite.com
Dogpile	dogpile.com	Lycos	lycos.com
Yahoo!	yahoo.com	Ask	ask.com
Bing	bing.com	WebCrawler	webcrawler.com

Google safe searching for kids   safesearchkids.com

BASIC SEARCHING METHODS

Searching the Internet can bring the information from around the world into your home or office – but it can also be an incredibly frustrating and time-consuming disaster.

To find relevant information:

- **analyze your topic** – Searching for very broad subjects such as "history of the United States" will produce a huge number of "hits" and be very confusing. Determine what you really want to know – a particular period in U.S. history, a list of democratic presidents, 20th century inflation rates, etc.

- **select keywords for your topic** – The keywords you choose may or may not bring you the results you want. Be prepared to use similar words for your topic.

- **keyword phrase searching** – Use quotation marks around words you want searched as a phrase.

- **spelling help** – A search engine shows you results for the topic it thinks you are most likely to want even if you are not sure of the spelling. As you type, a list of possible topics will appear.
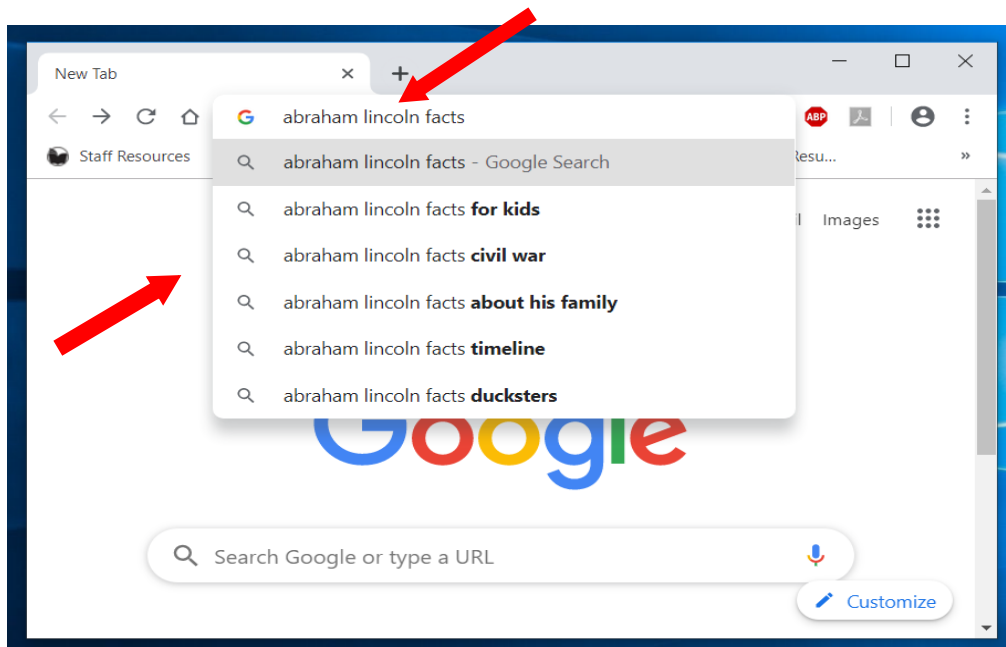
SEARCHING TIPS AND TRICKS

What words should I put in the search box?

Tip 1: Start with the basics
No matter what you're looking for, start with a simple search like: *closest airport*
You can always add a few descriptive words if necessary.

If you're looking for a place or product in a specific location, add the location.
For example: *bakery seattle*

Tip 2: Choose words carefully
Try to choose words that are likely to appear on the site you're looking for. For example, instead of saying "my head hurts", type: "*headache*" because that's the word a medical site would use.

Tip 3: Don't worry about the little things
- **Spelling**: a search engine's spell checker automatically uses the most common spelling of a given word, whether or not you spell it correctly
- **Capitalization**: a search for *New York Times* is the same as *new york times*
- **No insignificant words needed:** leave out words like "a", "the", "and", etc.
  You don't need to type in a full sentence or punctuation.

Tip 4: Find quick answers
For many searches, the search engine will do the work for you and show an answer to your question in the search results.
- **Weather**: type *weather* to see the weather in your location or add a city name, like *weather san francisco* to find weather for a specific place
- **Dictionary**: type *define* in front of any word to see its definition and pronunciation
- **Calculations**: enter a math equation: *3*9123*
- **Unit conversions**: enter any conversion: *3 dollars to euros*
- **Sports**: search for the name of your team to see a schedule, game scores & more
- **Quick facts**: search for the name of a celebrity, location, movie, or song to find related information
- **Food calories**: type the food to get the nutrition information: *egg calories*

EXPERT SEARCH TIPS

- **Exclude words from your search:** put - (the minus symbol) DIRECTLY in front of a word you want to leave out. For example: *jaguar speed -car*
- **Search for an exact match:** put a word or phrase inside quotes *"tallest building"*
- **Search for wildcards or unknown words:** put a * in your word or phrase where you want to leave a placeholder. For example: *"largest * in the world"*
- **Create advanced searches:** Settings / Advanced Search
- **Tired of typing?** search using your voice (on a smartphone with Google Chrome) or a computer with attached microphone

GOOGLE SEARCH ENGINE

Type your keywords in the **SEARCH BAR** separated by blanks and press ENTER. The Google search engine returns all websites that contain your keywords with the most relevant websites listed first.

You can see the number of **RESULTS** or "hits" at the top of the screen. The name of each website is highlighted in blue and is the **LINK** to click on, the web address is highlighted in green below that, and a short description follows. Google adds a "PEOPLE ALSO ASK" section with frequently asked questions and answers for the topic.

ALL websites will be automatically searched. Narrow down the search by clicking on:
- **IMAGES**
- **NEWS**
- **VIDEOS**
- **SHOPPING**
- **MORE: MAPS, FLIGHTS, FINANCE**

For even better results, use the **ADVANCED SEARCH** option found under SETTINGS.
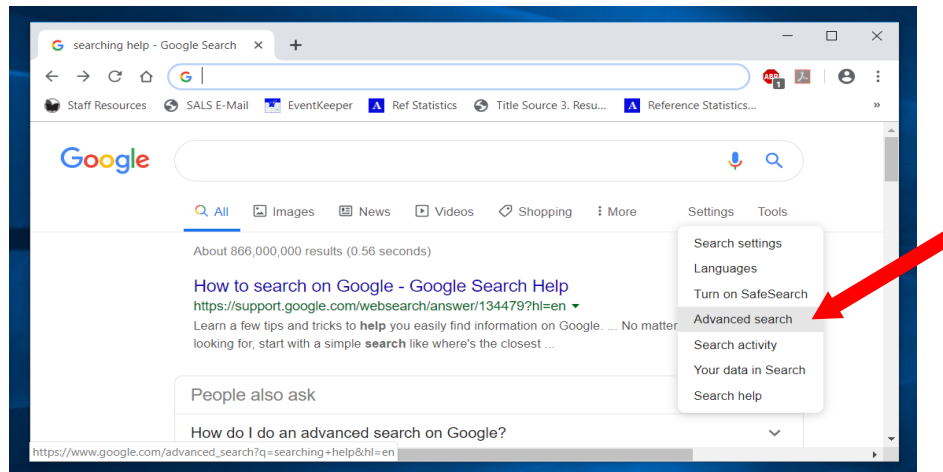
Scroll down to further **NARROW YOUR RESULTS.**

EVALUATING YOUR SOURCES

It is very important to evaluate the validity of your information. *Just because it appears on the Internet does not mean it is true, accurate, or reflective of any kind of reliable scholarship.*

For each website, use the following checklist:

- CONSIDER THE SOURCE: Investigate the site, its mission, contact information, and URL
- CHECK THE AUTHOR: Are they credible? Are they real?
- CHECK THE DATE: Is it current? Has it been updated?
- CHECK YOUR BIASES: Could your own beliefs affect your judgment?
- READ BEYOND: Headlines can be an effort to get clicks – read the whole story.
- SUPPORTING SOURCES: Is the information authentic? Do they cite their sources?
- JOKE OR OPINION: Is it biased, ironic, a joke, satire or spoof?
- ASK THE EXPERTS: Ask a librarian or consult a fact-checking site.

WEB SAFETY AND SECURITY

Secure Websites: You may decide to shop online, pay your bills online, or you may need to provide personal information for a job application. Be cautious! **NEVER send personal information to an unknown or unsecure website.**

Look for websites that have an "**s**" in the URL and a lock icon. Information you enter on a secure site will be encrypted so it cannot be "captured" by someone eavesdropping on your connection. Be especially vigilant in using public wireless connections. There are ways for people to scan the information you're sending. Don't hand someone your credit card by using an unsecured connection!

TIPS FOR ONLINE PURCHASES: Purchase a gift card for the store where you want to shop online (CVS, Walmart, Target, Cabelas, BestBuy, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, etc.). These cards do not charge a purchase fee and can be found at local stores.

Make your online purchase on the store's website, use the gift card (INSTEAD OF YOUR PERSONAL CREDIT CARD), and have the item shipped to you (usually for free). This removes the possibility of someone getting your credit card information. Or use a site like PAYPAL, a worldwide online payments system.
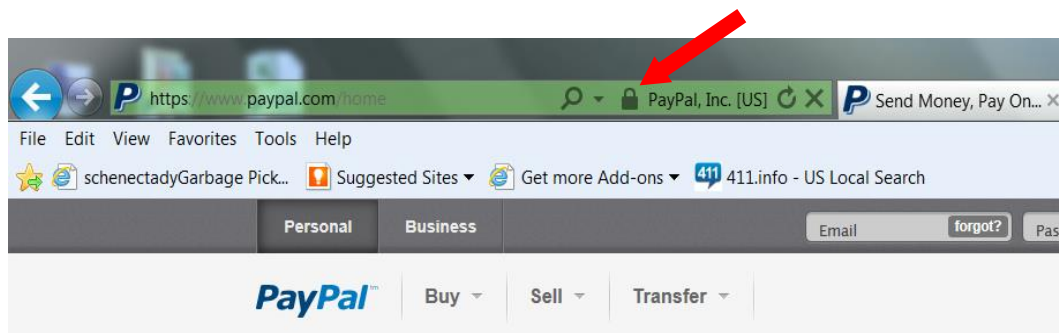
Viruses: Viruses are malicious software programs designed by other computer users to cause destruction and spread themselves to other computers. Viruses are loaded to your computer without your knowledge. Protect your computer using virus safety software. You can purchase a program (like Norton and McAfee) or download free antivirus software (such as AVAST or AVG).

Scams: Don't be a victim of modern day scam artists. BE ALERT! Don't click on:
- fraudulent emails or attachments (a bank will never ask for personal information via email)
- bogus pop-up messages ("warnings" regarding your computer should be met with suspicion)
- sneaky ads (ads pretending to be news articles)
- link bait (links with enticing or foreboding titles)
- "get rich quick" schemes asking you to invest money
- scare tactics (alarming subjects and requests for your information)
- "friends in need" (lost wallet/passport/backpack)
- friendly strangers or celebrities with great products (too good to be true)

These are ways to get you to send these people your personal information or sell you something.

<p style="text-align:center; color:red;">**REMEMBER: TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE
IS ALWAYS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.**</p>

The Federal Trade Commission's website is helpful for online security issues:
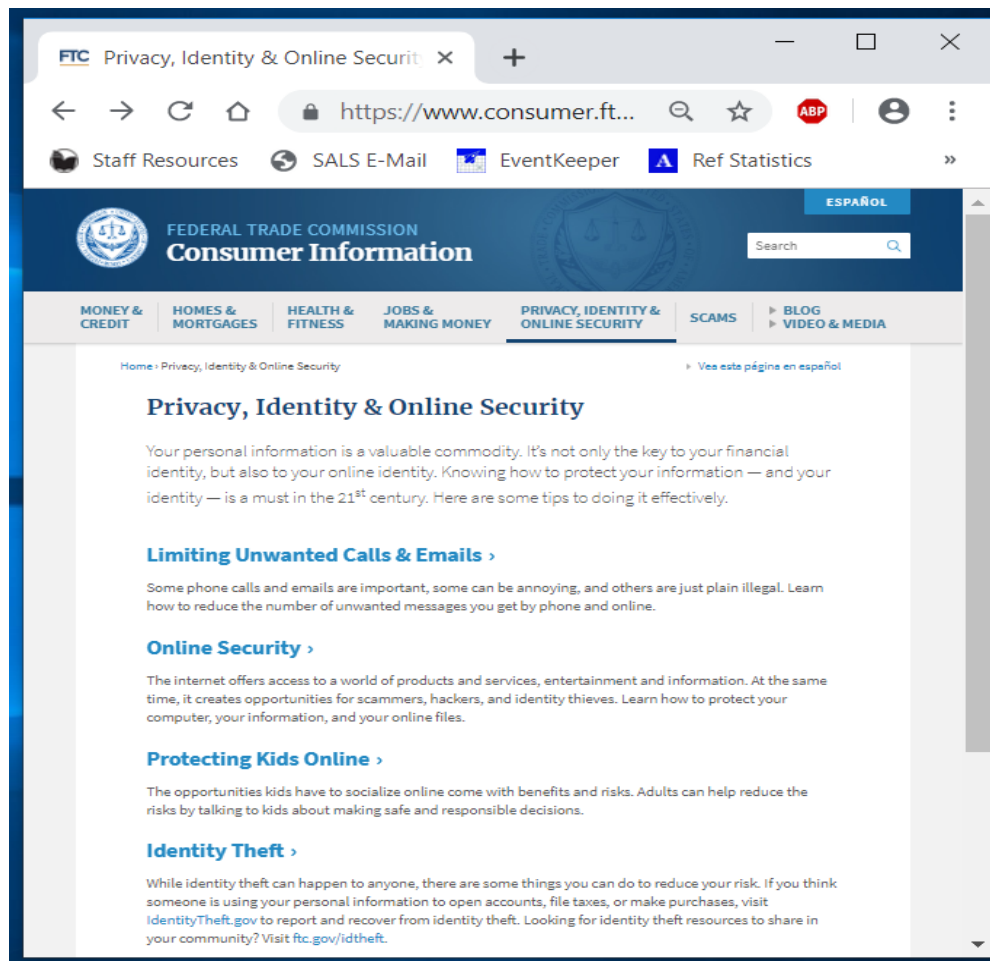
Now You Try It!!
Exercises for Searching the Internet

1. You want to research the history of the U.S. White house. Enter *White House* as your search term. Are the results specific to your topic? How many results are listed? Now try *history White House*. Are the results more relevant?

2. Click Images. You know Larry Hart has a wide selection of pictures of the history of Schenectady. What search terms would you enter? View images using your key words.

3. Click Maps. Enter your address. If a picture of your house appears on the map, click "street view" under the picture.

4. Click More: Finance   and enter *GE* for the latest stock quote.

5. Explore the popular YouTube feature under the Google Apps menu and search their site.

5. Click Search. Enter SCPL. Click on the library homepage link. Click on "Research" on the left of the page and explore the "Selected Internet Links" section.

6. Compare search results using Bing, Google, and Yahoo search engines for a simple search on your favorite food.

RESOURCES
scpl.org/resources_services/reference_research.html
Schenectady County Public Library's research links for various topics such as Business & Personal Finance, Careers & Job Hunting, Community Resources, Genealogy, Legal Resources, Health Information, Newspapers, Tax Forms and more.

askabbystokes.com
Excellent guides, resources, and videos especially created for those who are new to the Internet

support.google.com/websearch
Google support on searching and browsing the Internet.

guides.lib.berkeley.edu/evaluating-resources
A tutorial for evaluating resources on the Internet.

refdesk.com/toc.html
Internet beginner's guides, tutorials and various website links.

OnGuardOnline.gov (FTC)   SNOPES.COM   US-CERT.GOV
Investigate possible scams using these websites.

AVG.com   or   AVAST.com
Free download of antivirus software (choose only one).