



# Becoming More Web Search Savvy

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What the research on Web searching shows:

- Web searching differs from searching in other environments (databases, online catalogs) with searchers utilizing fewer terms and simpler strategies.
  - 20-29% of all U.S. Web-based searches utilize one-term queries.
  - The number of searchers viewing only one results page increased to 73% in 2002 (better relevancy ranking?).
  - Search success is best measured by both effectiveness and efficiency.
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## The Four-Step Plan

1. Analyze your topic to decide what you know, what you need.
  2. Pick the best starting place.
  3. Review as you go, applying evaluative criteria.
  4. Modify approach as needed.
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### 1. Analyze your topic to decide what you know, what you need.

- a. Type of information sought:
  - i. Is it a specific topic (fact-finding, known item)?
  - ii. Is it a broad topic, possibly encompassing several areas with no one answer?
- b. Likely terminology:
  - i. Distinctive words or phrases (*pink noise, jump the shark*)
  - ii. Possible synonyms (*teenager, adolescent*) or variant spellings (*behavior, behaviour*)
- c. Contextually related information
  - i. Related societies or organizations (*Centers for Disease Control for a bird flu search*)
  - ii. Area of interest to eliminate possible false drops (*Madonna with art*)

**2. Pick the best starting place.**

- a. Web search engine (<http://www.google.com>)
- b. Web directory (<http://directory.google.com>)
- c. Meta-search engines (<http://dogpile.com>)

**3. Review as you go, applying evaluative criteria.**

- Web evaluation criteria (<http://www.library.kent.edu/webeval>): authority, objectivity, accuracy, currency, usability.

**4. Modify approach as needed.**

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**Google: Sample Searches**

<b>1. Phrase search: <i>pink noise</i></b>
pink noise
"pink noise"
"pink noise" -rock -music -band

<b>2. No (or few) distinctive words: <i>remote gizmo for advancing PowerPoint slides</i></b>
remote advancing powerpoint
remote advancing powerpoint OR presentation
remote powerpoint OR presentation

<b>3. Synonyms: <i>fuel costs in the aviation industry</i></b>
fuel costs aviation
fuel costs aviation OR airline

<b>4. Currency: <i>current information on furor over fashion model's weight</i></b>
fashion model weight OR anorexia [past 6 months]
fashion model runway weight OR anorexia [past 6 months]
fashion model runway weight OR anorexia London OR Milan [past 6 months]

**5. Search within document; modify search: *How much calcium is in the human body?***

calcium amount "human body"

calcium amount "human body" site:.gov

calcium composition "human body" site:.gov

**6. Broad search: *Studies on the retention of students who are the first in their family to attend college.***

retention college students "first in their family"

retention college students "first in their family" site:.edu

(retention college students) (study OR studies OR report OR reports) "first in their family" site:.edu

**7. Other formats: *St John's wort and depression—PowerPoint***

st johns wort depression site:.edu filetype:ppt

[copyrighted material—online style manual guides: <http://www.library.kent.edu/style> ]

**8. Critically evaluate: *RYT Hospital-Dwayne Medical Center***

bogus or legit?

Search Google for "bogus web sites" to identify others

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**Directory: Google Directory (<http://directory.google.com/>)**

**Sample Search: *bathing a dog***

Home/Pets/Dogs/Grooming

bathing OR bath

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**Metasearch: Dogpile (<http://dogpile.com/>)**

**Sample Search: *blueberry stains***

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## Criteria for Evaluating Web Resources

Web users are encouraged to employ a healthy skepticism when visiting any site and to use criteria, such as those below, to gather evidence on the quality of the information in the Web site.

[Click here for a Website evaluation form--in [PDF](#) or [Microsoft Word](#) or [RTF](#) format--designed to be used in conjunction with these criteria. Faculty are invited to use this form in their classes when making an assignment of this type].

1. **Authority:** Who created the site?
  - o What is their authority?
    - Do they have expertise or experience with the topic?
    - What are their credentials, institutional affiliation?
  - o Is organizational information provided?
  - o Does the URL suggest a reputable affiliation with regard to the topic--personal or official site; type of Internet domain (i.e., .edu: educational institution; .org: non-profit organization; .com: commercial enterprise; .net: Internet Service Provider; .gov: governmental body; .mil: military body)?
2. **Objectivity:** Is the purpose and intention of the site clear, including any bias or particular viewpoint?
  - o Are the purpose and scope stated?
  - o Who is the intended audience?
  - o Is the information clearly presented as being factual or opinion, primary or secondary in origin?
  - o What criteria are used for inclusion of the information?
  - o Is any sponsorship or underwriting fully disclosed?
3. **Accuracy:** Is the information presented accurate?
  - o Are the facts documented or well-researched?
  - o Are the facts similar to those reported in related print or other online sources?
  - o Are the Web resources for which links are provided quality sites?
4. **Currency:** Is the information current?
  - o Is the content current?
  - o Are the pages date-stamped with last update?
5. **Usability:** Is the site well-designed and stable?
  - o Is the site organization logical and easy to maneuver?
  - o Is the content written at a level that is readable by the intended audience?
  - o Has attention been paid to presenting the information