



### Web Research and Evaluation

Launch site: <http://www.ccsf.edu/Library/reference.html>

#### SEARCH TIPS FOR MANY WEB SEARCH TOOLS

. The table below shows how different searches are commonly constructed in most popular search engines.

<p><b>Choose essential key words</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. don't use words like about, information, state, etc.</li> <li>2. try changing words for different results</li> </ol>	<p><b>Examples</b></p> <p>info about <b>gas drilling</b> off state of <b>California</b>  offshore drilling california</p>
<p><b>Ways to Focus or Obtain Fewer Results</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. add or change key words and phrases</li> <li>2. exact phrase searching, use quotation marks</li> <li>3. eliminate keywords or phrases (use minus sign)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Examples</b></p> <p>drilling rigs california environmental hazards  "drilling rigs" "oil spills"  "drilling rigs" - jobs</p>
<p><i>Use "Advanced Search" for Additional Focusing:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. limit keyword or phrase to a specific domain</li> <li>5. limit keyword or phrase to a specific part of the web page</li> </ol>	<p>In Google, <u>Search with a site or domain:</u> <b>.edu</b>  In Ask.com, for <u>Location of words</u>, select:  <b>in page title</b></p>
<p><b>Ways to Broaden or Obtain More Examples</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. use synonyms for keywords, connecting with OR</li> <li>2. remove keywords or phrases</li> </ol>	<p><b>Examples</b></p> <p>"drilling rigs" OR "drilling platforms"  instead of: san francisco oil spill offshore  try just: san francisco oil spill</p>

#### TIPS:

- Try different ways to do the search; try different search engines; ask a Reference Librarian for help.
- If there is a problem with your search, check the engine's **Help** link. Look for such terms as "Help," "Search Tips," "About," "FAQ..."
- Remember, different search tools (engines and databases) may use different ways to combine words. Here are some ways you might see searches constructed by looking at Advanced Search or help files:

*Phrases:* quotation marks, dashes (without spaces) between words

*Require all words:* +, and, all the words, must include

*Eliminate words:* -, not, and not, none of the words

*Use synonyms:* or, either, any of the words, should include

#### Evaluating Web Documents/Pages

Remember that anyone can publish anything on the Web, so you are responsible for evaluating the quality of the Web pages you use for your papers and assignments. Below are some questions you can use to help you evaluate Web pages. To answer the questions, you may need to explore more than the specific Web page by checking its home page or links.

Within a **URL**, the **top level domain** is important and might give you some general clues about the contents of a Web site/page. Some examples of domain names are:

domain	Meaning	domain	Meaning
.edu	educational site	.org	non-profit organization
.com	company site	.net	network operations
.gov	government site	.mx, .uk, .ca	Country designation (Mexico, United Kingdom, Canada)

### Questions to Ask to Evaluate Web Sites

- 1. URL** (Web address) What is the top level domain? (.edu, etc.) Does the URL contain the name or acronym of a company or organization?
  - 2. AUTHORSHIP and SPONSORSHIP** Who is responsible for the contents of the page? Are they journalists, professionals, or people writing from their individual experiences? How much expertise do they have? Is this page sponsored or published by a company, government agency or organization of some sort? What is that organization and what does it do?
  - 3. OBJECTIVITY** Does the web page mix opinions with facts? Are the writers and sponsors just providing information or might they have other goals? Are they selling products? What is their political, social, or religious agenda?
  - 4. CURRENCY** When was this information written and published? Does it contain facts that might have changed since it was written? Is it missing recent events that are important for your needs?
  - 5. ACCURACY** How accurate and complete is the information? Are opinions clearly identified? Are conclusions logical? Are there any contradictions or things that don't quite add up? Are there footnotes or citations given to show where the facts came from?
- BOTTOM LINE:** Is this information reliable? Would you feel confident citing this web page in your research paper or making important decisions based on this source?

### Creating References to Web Sites

To properly cite a web page in your research, you need the following pieces of information:

- The author of the web page, if given on the page.
- The title of the specific web **page**.
- The title of the web **site** (underlined) **if this page is part of a larger site.**
- The date when this **page** was created or last modified or updated.
- The organization or company which sponsors or publishes this page, if applicable.
- The date you looked at the page on the web.
- The URL.

Formats for citing Web pages vary; the library has handouts, online links and reference books on creating citations for online sources. Here are two examples in MLA format:

Delaney, Robert. "MLA Citation Style." 15 Nov. 2007. 26 Aug. 2008

<<http://www.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/workshop/citmla.htm>>.

"How Do I Document Sources from the Web in My Works-Cited List?" Frequently Asked

Questions about MLA Style. 29 Apr. 2008. MLA: Modern Language Association. 28 Aug.

2008 <[http://www.mla.org/publications/style/style\\_faq/style\\_faq4](http://www.mla.org/publications/style/style_faq/style_faq4)>.