Google Tips and Tricks Every Student Should Know

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Whether you're a student in college (or earlier) or a lifelong learner, Google is an essential tool for learning. Here are a few tips for using Google search and other apps more effectively to further your education.

Many of these tips you've no doubt learned before from our previous Google coverage, but every worthwhile subject is worth reviewing now and again, and today we're looking specifically at the best Google tricks for students. So here we go!

Quickly Find Exactly the Information You Need

Everyone knows how to "Google," but not everyone Googles efficiently. This one-minute video from Hack College offers these three essential tips:

1. **Be Specific.** Find pages within sites using **site:**[website URL] and your search phrase, find authors using **author:**[name], and type **intitle:**[word] to find a page with that word in the title.

2. **Format.** Use **filetype:**[jpg or other extension] to find images and all sorts of files (such as docs and pdfs)

3. **Broaden Your Search.** Use an asterisk (*****) as a wildcard search operator to fill in the blanks. For example, "Why money is *"

Taking this further, you can also:

Find exams to practice with and other reference materials. Taking the "site:" operator a little further, you can search only education sites by typing in **site:edu**. This comes in handy when search for exams you can use to practice with: "site:edu advanced chemistry exam." Combine this with the "filetype:pdf" or "filetype:doc" format for additional exams and documents. You can find a list of Google search operators on this Google help page and even more advanced operators here, but there are also non-official filetypes, such as "hlp for help files and js for Javascript files" you can search for (which we know thanks to the NSA, oddly enough).

History/politics students (or anyone interested in government) should also remember they can search **site:gov.**

Find more research. Use the "**related:**" operator to find similar sites to broaden your research. For example, "related:www.lifehacker.com" or "related:www.nsa.gov" to make sure you're covering all your bases in your research.

Limit search results. Let's say your professor doesn't want you to use certain sources. Use the minus sign (**-**) operator to exclude results from a certain site (e.g., "encryption –site:Wikipedia.org"). You can also do this to refine the results when a word can mean more than one thing (e.g., "jaguar –car").

Similarly, if there's only a range of dates, measurements, or other numbers you want to find, use two periods (**..**) to set that range, e.g., "manufacturing 1990..2001" or "laptops ..$1000" (leave out one of the numbers to set a minimum or maximum).

Combine modifiers together. There are all sorts of powerful things you can do when you combine these search tricks. For example: "site:nytimes.com high school "test scores" –SAT2010..2014"

Here are more research tricks in one handy infographic.

Use Google Search Shortcuts to Pull Up Quick Answers

You shouldn't have to dig around or visit web pages for easy answers.

Get definitions. Use "define [word]" to quickly bring up a word's definition.

Make your browser do math. Also, start typing in your browser to do instant calculations and conversions (you don't even have to hit enter!)

Have Google fill in the blanks. Just start typing something in, and Google's autocomplete will likely give you the answer. For example "Martin Luther King Jr. was born on " will show you "January 15 1929" and "Thomas Edison invented " will list a few notable inventions. Google's Knowledge Graph might even show you quickly the answers you're looking for beneath your search. If autocomplete doesn't help, add the "*" wildcard to get more answers (e.g., "Obama voted * on the * bill" to give you stories on a bunch of different bills).

Check out 20 Google Search shortcuts that can come in handy, and if you're using Google Now, you have over 60 commands you can use to get quick information just by saying "Okay Google."

Organize and Cite Research with Google Drive

Google Drive comes with a research tool that finds information for you while you work on your paper. It also conveniently grabs the citation and inserts it, already formatted, for you into your document. Handy!

To use it, go to Tools > Research in your document or presentation and enter your search term. You can also right-click on a word or phrase in your document to search it. Click on the Google icon to specifically search images, Google Scholar, quotes, and more.

In the research pane, hover over a link to preview the page, click on it to open in a new tab, or drag-and-drop selected text into your document. The "cite" button will grab the citation (in MLA, APA, or Chicago styles) and the "insert link" button will insert the source website into your document.

Search Google Books and Use Google Scholar

In the olden days, we had to go to the library and look up books that possibly had information in them as resources for papers. Now, you can just do a Google book search (which includes magazines) for anything that's relevant, copy quotes, and pull all the information needed for your bibliography.

Head to books.google.com to start researching your topic or use Google's advanced book search for options like book language, author, publication dates, and more. In the search results, you can also click on "Search tools" to filter books by ones that are available with a preview, select books or magazines, and filter or sort by date.

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Additionally, when you search on a title, Google's book overview page will list popular passages, a word

cloud, bibliographic information, and other reference information.

Finally, learn how to use Google Scholar to find research material (peer-reviewed journals, patents, and more), with this video from Googler Dan Russell (or a very quick list of tips from Google here):