

Using Advanced Web Search Operators to Find What You're Looking for on the Internet

Trying to find information about a corporation, a person, or something else on the web? You could just string together chains of words and tell Google to find results, but you'll likely experience a problem that is only getting worse over time; the Internet provides *too much information* instead of too little. The hardest task in searching for information on the web today isn't getting results, it's wading through the overwhelming quantity of data and finding useful results.

Google has built a very powerful web search tool that uses specific "operators," instructions that you give Google to narrow down searches within very specific parameters. Here's how you do it.

An operator is a word or symbol that defines the relationships between groups of search terms. You can use operators to tell Google to search for precise phrases, for specific combinations of words, to exclude specific words or phrases, to look on particular web sites, to look for certain kinds of files, and much more. In combination they make web searches fast and powerful sources of information.

Suppose you're really interested in Chevron and its connections to politically powerful and connected people, and you learn randomly that George W. Bush's former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was a Chevron board member at one time. Now you want to find all the information you can about Rice's connection to Chevron.

To find web sites that mention two or more distinct terms, use the AND operator like this:

"Condoleezza Rice" **AND** Chevron

Note that I put Rice's name in quotes. That tells Google to only look for that exact name. Since Rice's name is rather unique this isn't all that necessary. But if you were looking for someone named William Davis, for example, it might help to put the person's full name in quotes so as to exclude other persons named William Davis, or with either the first or last names William or Davis from clouding your search results.

Now suppose you just want to compile information about Condoleezza Rice that is available on Chevron's web site. Use the SITE: operator to narrow down like this:

"Condoleezza Rice" **SITE:**<http://www.chevron.com>

Now suppose you want to look for other corporate, academic, foundation, NGO, or other boards Condoleezza Rice has sat upon. Use the AND function again, but also use quotation marks to narrow search results to pages that mention the specific phrase "board of directors." To reiterate, the quotes produce results for pages where the exact phrase "board of directors" appears, and not pages where the words "board" and "directors" might be present in some other context.

"Condoleezza Rice" **AND** "board of directors"

You can also expand a search string to include other possible versions of a phrase. For example, many

universities, foundations, NGOs, and governments have boards of "overseers," "trustees," "governors," "regents," and other lofty positions. To search for any and all of these boards on which Condoleezza Rice may have been a member use the OR operator like this:

"Condoleezza Rice" **AND** "board of directors" **OR** "board of trustees," **OR** "board of governors," **OR** "board of regents"

After searching these functions and sorting through results you may have noticed that Condoleezza Rice is also a professor at Stanford University. Perhaps you want to know more about Chevron's other links to Stanford. You can again use the simple AND operator to combine the terms "Chevron" AND "Stanford," but a lot of the results will be about Condoleezza Rice. A way to exclude Condoleezza Rice from these search results is to use a minus operator sign like this:

"Chevron" **AND** "Stanford University" -"condoleezza rice"

You can also tack on the minus symbol before domains also to exclude entire web sites which comes in handy if a particular web site is flooding your search results with junk or too many results.

There are many more Google operators to refine your searches. Check out <http://support.google.com/websearch/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=136861> and play around with what's there when you're doing research.

And Google Actually IS Very "Evil"

Google itself is a major global corporation the purpose of which is to gather, store, and process consumer data, to advertise, and to control flows of information. The company's monopolistic hold on the web search and advertising markets has been the subject of an FTC antitrust investigation. Google gets huge public subsidies, and pays only about a 2.4% corporate tax rate thanks to its clever tax lawyers who are the envy of Wall Street. It's unknown just how closely Google works with the government to spy on people and organizations, but it is happening, and the company has been accused of small retailers of extorting advertising payments by lowering a firm's appearance in product search results on the web.

Don't want Google to track your searches and log your data? Don't want Google trying to sell you Chevron's gasoline with ads inserted in your Gmail or on Youtube just because you did some research earlier in the day? Sign out of your Google account before using the search tool. Or use <http://www.DuckDuckGo.com>, a Google scraper that doesn't track you, but still allows for most of the advanced search operators used on Google. Or use another web search portal. Most of them allow for basic operators to be used.