

# Searching the Internet

The ability to effectively and efficiently search the internet is rapidly becoming a highly sought after skill. Following is a general overview of different tools that can be used to search the internet and some helpful tips:

There are four main tools that can be utilized to perform searches:

1. Search engines
2. Web directories
3. Ask an expert services
4. Research databases

## Search Engines

Search engines should be used when you are trying to find all web pages that contain a certain word or phrase, eg Quesnel. Examples of popular search engines are: [www.altavista.com](http://www.altavista.com), [www.lycos.com](http://www.lycos.com), [www.msn.com](http://www.msn.com), [www.northernlight.com](http://www.northernlight.com), [www.goto.com](http://www.goto.com), [www.directhit.com](http://www.directhit.com), and [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Canadian search engines include [www.altavistacanada.com](http://www.altavistacanada.com) and [www.excite.com](http://www.excite.com). There are also multi-access search engines which search many different search engines at the same time. Examples of these are: [www.metacrawler.com](http://www.metacrawler.com), [www.savvysearch.com](http://www.savvysearch.com), [www.mamma.com](http://www.mamma.com), [www.ixquick.com](http://www.ixquick.com), and [www.redesearch.com](http://www.redesearch.com).

If you want to start your search by asking a question, try [www.ask.com](http://www.ask.com). This site is known as a natural language search engine, which means that you can ask questions as you would in conversation. If you want to find an index of different search engines, try: [www.beaucoup.com](http://www.beaucoup.com), [www.allsearchengines.com](http://www.allsearchengines.com) Or [www.searchenginewatch.com](http://www.searchenginewatch.com).

## Web Directories

Web directories should be used when you want to research a specific topic eg. forestry in Quesnel. Because of this, you will usually notice less, more relevant “hits” when you search using a web directory. They will organize answers in categories. Examples of web directories are [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) (within which you can also search Canadian sites only), [canada.looksmart.com](http://canada.looksmart.com), [www.snap.com](http://www.snap.com), [www.about.com](http://www.about.com), and <http://www.researchbuzz.org/r/>.

## Ask an Expert

These are sites where you can direct your question to an expert. Some sites charge for this service and some do not. Quite often, if you are willing to purchase a membership, you will receive faster service than people who use the service for free. Examples of these sites are: [www.askme.com](http://www.askme.com), and [www.ExpertCentral.com](http://www.ExpertCentral.com).

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## Research Databases

These are sites that keep a vast assortment of articles and journals on file. You find what you are looking for and pay a fee to view it. Be warned that if after you view it you decide that it is not applicable, you do not get your money back. Examples of this include [www.elibrary.com](http://www.elibrary.com) (yearly subscription), [www.newscan.com](http://www.newscan.com) (cost per article), [www.northernlight.com](http://www.northernlight.com) (cost per article) and [www.infomart.ca](http://www.infomart.ca) (yearly subscription). As a cost saving measure, once you find an article that interests you, instead of accessing that article you could go to that particular magazine or newspaper's website and see if you can view the article from there for free.

## Search Tips

- Search engines use what are called *boolean operators* to understand what you are asking for. These can include: *and, or, not, +, -, near, or far*. Different search engines use different boolean connectors. Never assume that commands are universal. So when using a search engine, go into the help files first to see what connectors or commands you should use to conduct your search.
- Generally, if you are researching a phrase eg. "hockey in Canada", you should enclose the phrase in quotation marks. By doing this, engine will search for pages that have the complete phrase. If you do not include the quotation marks, the search will bring up any pages that have these three words even if they are not related to each other.
- To perform an effective search, you should use more than one web site.
- Using capital letters will often give you different results than using lower case.
- Try experimenting with different phrases and words to conduct your search. Be creative. This will help you to reference more relevant sites.
- Try different spellings of words eg. *color* and *colour*.
- Think about and look for associations or groups that may have reason to collect the kind of information that you are looking for. Look for links (these are other pages that may have a common theme). Most web pages have a "links" section.