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Searching

Choosing the Right Type of Search Tool

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Prerequisite

- “Getting Started on the Computer” lesson or familiarity with the Windows operating system.
- “Navigating the Web” lesson or familiarity with the Internet and navigating the Web using a Web browser.

Objectives

You will be able to:

- Select the appropriate type of Internet search tool.
- Find a Web site by browsing topics.
- Find a Web site by performing a keyword search.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Gather Supplies



- You will need a separate sheet of paper to write your answers to the review questions.
- ▶ ■ In order to save your work, you will need a floppy or Zip disk.

Photocopy Worksheets and Fact Sheets



▶ Worksheets and fact sheets are designed to be photocopied so that you can refer to them during the lesson, write directly on them, and take them home. If a lesson includes worksheets or fact sheets, you'll find them at the end of the lesson. Check now to see if this lesson includes any. Photocopy them before you start the lesson.

Copy Working Files to a Disk



▶ If a lesson includes an electronic working file, you'll find a printed copy at the end of the lesson to use as a reference. You will work directly in the electronic copy during the lesson. Check now to see if this lesson includes a working file. If it does, copy the electronic working file to a floppy or Zip disk. You can copy the working file from the desktop or download it from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Web site <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/libraries/uslibraryprogram/granteesupport/trainingcurricula/default1.htm>.

To Copy a Working File from the Desktop

1. Insert a floppy or Zip disk into the appropriate disk drive of the computer.
2. Double-click the **Computer Companion** folder on the desktop.
3. Double-click the folder of the lesson you want to use. The files in each lesson folder include the working files that are used with the lesson.
4. Click the working file you want to use.
5. Click **Edit** on the menu bar, and select **Copy**.
6. Click the downward-pointing arrow on the **Address** bar, and select **3½ Floppy** to save to a floppy disk or select **Removable Disk (E:)** to save to a Zip disk.
7. Click **Edit** on the menu bar, and select **Paste**. The file is copied onto the disk.
8. Double-click the file to open and begin using it.

Printing Your Work

You might or might not be able to print from the computer you are working on. Consult a staff member for instructions. None of the lessons require printing.

See the *Printing, Saving, and Opening Files Quick Guide* for more information.

You are free to copy or print any part of this book. Copies may not be sold or used for commercial purposes.

Introduction



FACT SHEET: Good Search Tools

(Photocopy the fact sheet at the end of this lesson. You can refer to it during the lesson and take it home with you.)

Do you have a favorite search tool you currently use? What do you recommend to others? Different search tools work best in different circumstances, and you will find examples of each type as you work through the lesson. Being familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of various search tools helps you choose the best one for your searches.

The type of information you are looking for often determines what type of search tool you should use. If you are looking for information that could be considered a major topic of interest, for example, tourist information for a major metropolitan city, you could probably find it easily in a directory. If you are searching for information that might not be easy to find, such as a scientific paper, you will probably want to use a search engine or a metasearch tool.

There are three major types of search tools, which differ in the way they find and display Web sites:

- Search directories
- Search engines
- Metasearch tools

Each search tool looks a little different, but all are essentially large databases of Web sites. By searching these databases, you can find Web sites relevant to your needs.

REVIEW QUESTION

(Use a blank sheet of paper to write down your answer. You can check your answer against the one provided at the end of the lesson.)

1. What are the three types of search tools?

Using Search Directories

A *search directory* is a collection of Web sites that have been reviewed and arranged into subjects by people rather than by a computer. Each Web site is placed into a category and subcategory, possibly with an annotation or summary. Directories usually accept submissions from people or use automated tools to find new pages on the Web.

There is a feature you can use to search the collection of Web sites in the directory, although all entries are listed under one or more subject headings. The extent of human interaction in categorizing Web sites varies by search directory.

The following list summarizes the advantage and the disadvantage of search directories and information on when to use them.


| | |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Advantage | Many search directories have their list of Web sites screened by people. |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Disadvantage Search directories typically include a smaller number of sites than a search engine.

When to Use Use a search directory when you don't know what keywords to use in your search. In a search directory, you can browse topic areas to locate information instead of searching by keyword.

To Use a Search Directory to Browse Topics

You will search for tourist information on Seattle, Washington. If you want to search for information on your city or town, just replace *Seattle* with your town or city's name and replace *Washington* with your state's name.

1. Double-click the **Internet Explorer** icon  to start the program.
2. Type `www.yahoo.com` in the **Address** bar, and press ENTER.
3. Select the topic heading that matches the information you want to find. For instance, if you were looking for information on Seattle, you would select the following links: Recreation and Sports > Travel > Convention and Visitors Bureaus > By Region > U.S. States > Washington > Cities > Seattle. On the results page, you can locate travel information for Seattle.

Using Search Engines

The main characteristic that distinguishes *search engines* from search directories is how the Web sites in their databases are gathered and organized. A search engine finds Web pages by using small, automated computer programs called *spiders*, or *crawlers*. These programs continuously visit Web pages and add links to the search engine's database.

Because the sites are recorded automatically, search engines are often quite large. Search engines usually do not provide descriptive summaries and organized categories for their Web pages like directories do, because there is little or no human interaction in creating the database of Web sites. Instead, the search engine will likely display the first few lines of each Web page found on the search results page. Keyword searches are the primary method used for finding information in search engines. Although search engines have large lists of Web sites in their databases, these sites are not evaluated for content or accuracy.

The following list summarizes the advantage and the disadvantage of search engines and information on when to use them.

Advantage Search engines have large lists of Web sites in their databases.

Disadvantage Search engines do not evaluate the Web sites in their databases for content or accuracy.

When to Use Use a search engine when you are looking for common or well-documented information and you know what keywords to use. If you are looking for common information, like the IRS Web site, a search engine is the most useful tool to use.

To Use a Search Engine to Search Keywords

1. Double-click the **Internet Explorer** icon to start the program if it is not already open.
2. Type `www.google.com` in the **Address** bar. The Google Web page is displayed.
3. Type `seattle travel` in the **Search** text box, and click **Google Search**. The Google window displays search results for travel in Seattle.
4. Click a link to locate information on travel in Seattle.

To Use a Hybrid Search Tool

Some search tools include both a search directory and a search engine.

1. Double-click the **Internet Explorer** icon to start the program if it is not already open.
2. Type `www.altavista.com` in the **Address** bar. The AltaVista Web page is displayed.
3. Use either the directory or the **Search** box to locate information on travel in Seattle.

REVIEW QUESTION

(Use a blank sheet of paper to write down your answer. You can check your answer against the one provided at the end of the lesson.)

1. What is the difference between a search engine and a search directory?

Using Metasearch Engines

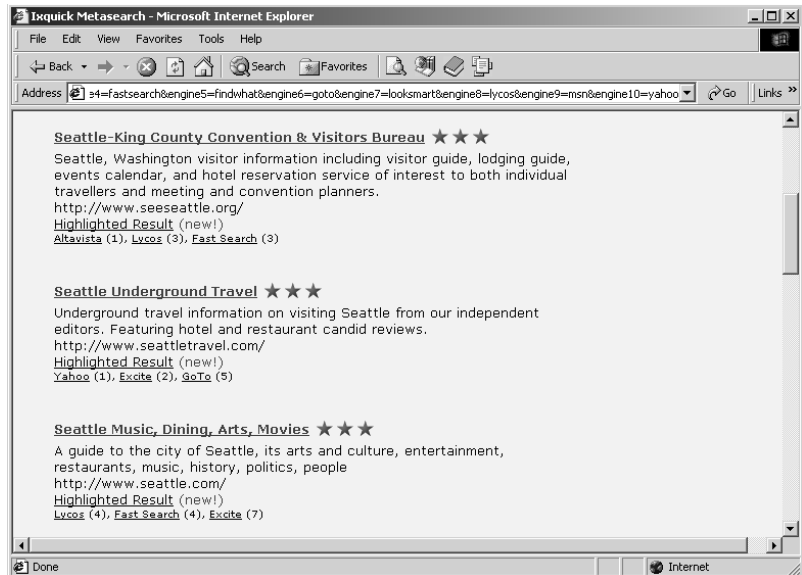
Metasearch engines act as intermediaries between your search and individual search engines. A metasearch engine sends your search criteria simultaneously to each search engine it uses. You can then access potential sites from the databases of many search engines at the same time. The drawback to using some metasearch engines, however, is that they are not always able to use the specific search criteria used by a search engine, so you cannot narrow or expand a search. For instance, not all metasearch engines are capable of differentiating between the criteria that some search engines use to exclude terms from a search.

The following list summarizes the advantage and the disadvantage of metasearch engines and information on when to use them.

- Advantage** You can search the databases of multiple search engines at the same time.
- Disadvantage** You cannot narrow a search very well, so it can be difficult to find the information you want, or sometimes you get more information than you need.
- When to Use** Use a metasearch engine when you have trouble locating information using a search engine or a search directory.

To Use a Metasearch Engine

1. Double-click the **Internet Explorer** icon to start the program if it is not already open.
2. Type `www.ixquick.com` in the **Address** bar. The Ixquick Metasearch Web page is displayed.
3. Type `seattle travel` in the **Search** box, and click **Search**. The search results are displayed.
4. Click a link to locate information on travel in Seattle. The number of stars next to each Web page title represents how many search engines included this Web page in their top-10 results.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

(Use a blank sheet of paper to write down your answers. You can check your answers against those provided at the end of the lesson.)

1. What is a metasearch engine?
2. When would you use a metasearch engine?

Search Tool Savvy

Search Engine Watch (www.searchenginewatch.com) is a Web site dedicated to keeping people up-to-date with the latest information on searching the Internet and search tools. On this site, you can find tips for searching the Web, read reviews of search tools, and locate search tools by what content they focus on. You can also sign up to receive free e-mail newsletters.

To Find a New Search Tool

There are a number of search tools on the Internet that you might have never used. You can find a list of different search tools on the Search Engine Watch Web site.

1. Double-click the **Internet Explorer** icon to start the program if it is not already open.
2. Type `www.searchenginewatch.com` in the **Address** bar, and press **ENTER**.
3. Click the **Search Engine Listings** link.
4. Click the **The Major Search Engines** link.
5. Browse the list of search engines, and then click the link to a search engine that you have never used.
6. Search for whatever information you want using this search engine.

To Locate Search Directories for Children

One of the features of the Search Engine Watch site is its directory of Web search tools for children. In addition to listing the Web sites geared toward children searching the Web, Search Engine Watch's writers also describe how the search tools work and how good the site is at filtering inappropriate information.

1. Double-click the **Internet Explorer** icon to start the program if it is not already open.
2. Type `www.searchenginewatch.com` in the **Address** bar, and press **ENTER**.
3. Click the **Search Engine Listings** link.
4. Click the **Kids Search Engines** link.
5. Click the **Major Childrens Guides** link, and view the guides listed.

Wrapping Up

Key Points to Remember

Use a couple of different types of search tools, such as a search tool that includes both a directory and an engine, and a quality annotated directory, and get to know those tools well.

Answers to Review Questions

INTRODUCTION

1. The three types of search tools are search directories, search engines, and metasearch engines.

USING SEARCH ENGINES

1. A search engine is a database listing of Web sites compiled by a computer, and a search directory is a list of Web sites created by people.

USING METASEARCH ENGINES

1. A metasearch engine is a search tool that searches multiple search engines at the same time.
2. Use a metasearch engine when you want a broad and comprehensive list of results.

Additional Resources

SEARCHING AND ITS CHALLENGES

- Searching the Web
<http://www.ext.nodak.edu/miv/curriculum/smenu.html>
- Finding Information on the Internet: A Tutorial
<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/FindInfo.html>
- Internet Public Library's Guide to Web Searching
<http://www.ipl.org/ref/websearching.html>
- ALA Libraries & the Internet Toolkit
<http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/internettoolkit.html>

SEARCH ENGINES

- How Search Engines Rank Web Pages
<http://www.searchenginewatch.com/webmasters/rank.html>
- Search Engine Showdown
www.searchengineshowdown.com

METASEARCH ENGINES

- Metacrawlers
<http://www.searchenginewatch.com/links/Metacrawlers>

Good Search Tools

| Search Tool | Web Address | Features |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SEARCH DIRECTORIES | | |
| <i>Librarians' Index to the Internet</i> | http://www.lii.org | Contains resources particularly useful to public library users, evaluated and annotated by librarians. |
| <i>Yahoo</i> | http://www.yahoo.com | One of the oldest and largest Web directories. |
| <i>Open Directory Project</i> | http://www.dmoz.org | A broad catalog of Web sites compiled by volunteer editors. |
| SEARCH ENGINES | | |
| <i>Google</i> | http://www.google.com | Ranks search results based on the number of links to a page. Good for finding relevant results. |
| <i>Fast</i> | http://www.alltheweb.com | The first search engine to index 200 million Web pages, this site aims to index the entire Web. |
| <i>AltaVista</i> | http://www.altavista.com | Offers comprehensive coverage and a wide range of searching commands. |
| METASEARCH ENGINES | | |
| <i>Ixquick</i> | http://www.ixquick.com | This metasearch engine searches 14 search engines and returns results by evaluating how relevant each of those tools considered the results to be. |
| <i>Metacrawler</i> | http://www.metacrawler.com | Offers a well-designed search page with a variety of search options. |
| <i>Ask Jeeves</i> | http://www.askjeeves.com | Ask a question, and <i>Ask Jeeves</i> will search its various search engines for results. |

