Search Tips for Utah's Online Library and the Internet

You can search Utah's Online Library resources and the Internet more effectively if you apply techniques that narrow results and brings the most relevant pages to the top of the results list.

Below are a few strategies to help you successfully find what you are looking for.

Select Keywords
The objective of *keyword* searching is to locate information that contains the keywords. Think of all the words that would always appear on that perfect page you are looking for. Be sure to select precise words and avoid common words such as the, of, and to.

Fine-Tune Your Keyword Searches
The biggest problem most people have with search engines is that simple keyword searches produce too many search results. You can help avoid this problem by adding operators that fine-tune your keywords.

AND Narrow Searches
If you get too many results, AND can help you narrow your search. Put AND between the terms you are searching.

For example, to search for weather lesson plans, type:

> lesson AND plans AND weather   search

OR Broaden Searches
If you don't get enough results, OR can help you expand your search. Think of related words or synonyms you can use to describe your search term.

For example, to search for dogs or canines, type:

> dogs OR canines   search

NOT Narrow Searches
If you are getting results that have nothing to do with your search, NOT can help you exclude specific topics. For example, "bass" can refer to fishing or music. You can exclude a word from your search by putting a NOT in immediately front of the term.

For example, to find Web pages about "bass" that do not contain the work "music," type:

> bass NOT music   search

"Phrases" Narrow Searches
Search for complete phrases by enclosing them in quotation marks. Words enclosed in double quotes ("like this") will appear together in all results exactly as you have entered them. Phrase searches are especially useful when searching for famous sayings or proper names.

Phrase example:

> "Four score and seven years ago"   search

The ability to search for phrases can be surprisingly useful. If you suspect that your student turned in plagiarized work, type in a phrase or two from the paper and see if it turns up elsewhere.

Additional Search Tips
- **NEAR** – Searches words and phrases near each other, usually within 10 words of each other. For example, "lesson NEAR plans."
- **?** – The ? represents a single character; two ?? represents two characters, and so on. Use within or at the end of a word (e.g., wom?n finds woman as well as women, and theat? finds theatre or theater).
- **Wildcard symbol *** – Expands a search term to include all forms of a root word (i.e., finding alternative spellings). For example, "econo*" retrieves economy, economic, etc.