Google Tips

What is Google?

- Search Engine – quick and easy way of finding information on the Internet
- Created in 1996 (initially called BackRub)
- 1997 name change to Google
- Mission "to organise the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful"
- Over 1 billion searches per day
- Worth around $200 billion

How Google Works:

Google uses a web crawler program (called Googlebot) to 'crawl' around the internet in order to find and retrieve available webpages. The webpages found by the crawler are indexed and added to Google's database. Users then search the database by entering search terms into Google's search box. Google then returns webpages which match the user's search terms.

Advantages:

- Simple interface
- Fast search
- Free to search
- No username and password required
- Available on any device with an internet connection

Limitations:

- Google cannot search the whole web e.g. password protected webpages, databases, 'hidden' webpages.
- Search is not flexible.
- Results are not ranked based on quality
- Information found via Google is not necessarily free
- You will usually receive far more results than it is possible to browse through – might miss something useful
- Look out for sponsored results from companies/organisations which have paid to have their website show up when certain keywords are used. They are unlikely to be the best results.

When to use Google:

- For general searching
- For an introduction to a topic
- When you are unsure of a website's exact URL
- When you want to check information or look for an alternative perspective
- When non-evidence based results are acceptable
- Domain specific results e.g. NHS and government publications

It is up to you to decide whether Google is the best place to search for the information you are looking for e.g. for journal articles it would be better to search the NHS Healthcare Databases.

Search Tips

How to access:

Go to: www.google.co.uk

Setting preferences:

Google allows you to set some search preferences. For example you can alter how many results appear on a page, ask for results to include languages other than English, turn on/off your search history and query predictions.

To modify your preferences go to: www.google.co.uk/preferences

Simple search:

Enter your keywords here and click search
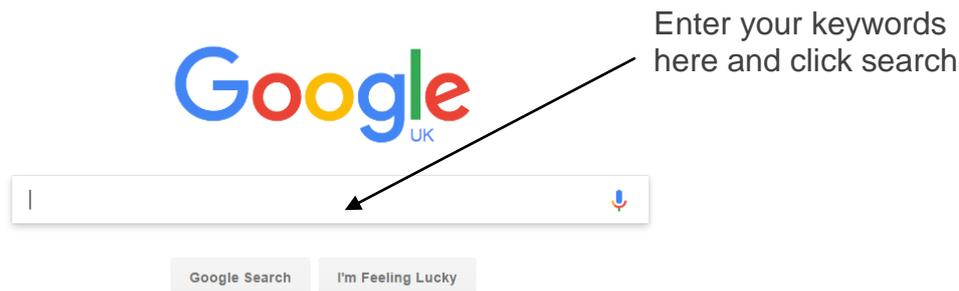
Keywords:

Keywords are the words that you enter into the search box. In order to bring you results Google matches your keywords with the webpages it holds in its database.

• It's best to enter more than one keyword but not a whole sentence
• Google matches the entered keywords to the webpages in its database –   not all synonyms/alternative spellings are auto searched
• The more keywords you enter the narrower and more specific your search   will be
• You don't need to write AND between your keywords – Google automatically searches for all entered keywords
• Not case sensitive – work WORK WoRk all the same
• Too many results? try entering more keywords to make your search more specific
• Few or zero results? Try entering fewer keywords to make your search more general

Advanced Search:

Access at: www.google.co.uk/advanced_search

Use the advanced search function to help you specify to the search engine exactly what you are looking for.

Example 1: The below search will find any webpages which contain one or more of the three entered keywords. This helps expand your search.

Example 2: The search below will locate any webpages which mention GP but will ignore any references to grand prix (which may also be returned when searching GP). Useful when results similar, but not related, to your search are returned.

Find pages with...		To do this in the search box.
all these words:	GP	Type the important words: tri-colour rat terrier
this exact word or phrase:		Put exact words in quotes: "rat terrier"
any of these words:		Type OR between all the words you want: miniature OR standard
none of these words:	grand prix	Put a minus sign just before words that you don't want: -rodent, -"Jack Russell"

Understanding your results:

Web address (green)

Number of results

Adverts/sponsored links

Brief description of web site

Link to webpage (blue)

Quality:

Be aware that the best quality results are not necessarily found on the first results page.

Things to consider:

☑ **Purpose** e.g. what are the site's aims and objectives? Who is the intended audience?

☑ **Accuracy** e.g. can you cross check the information? Is there a bibliography?

☑ **Coverage** e.g. are all aspects of the topic covered? Are there useful links to other sources? Is the information relevant in UK.

☑ **Currency** e.g. when was the information written? How often is the site updated?

☑ **Author** e.g. Who has written the information? Are they an expert in the field?

☑ **Accessibility** e.g is it easy to navigate round the site? Are the links logical?

www.discern.org.uk contains a quality assessment checklist, produced by the University of Oxford, which has been developed to help you assess the quality of any health information websites that you encounter. This can be very useful in helping you decide if a website is offering good quality information.

Simple Time Savers

These are useful search commands which direct Google to display an overview of your query at the top of the results page for quick reference.
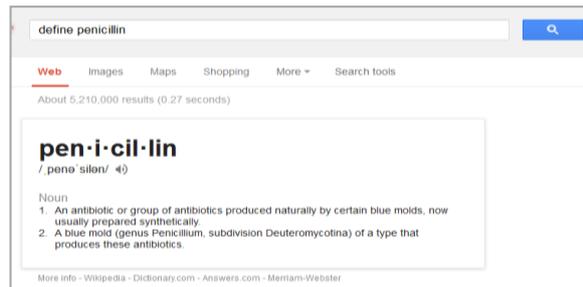
Weather:

Type: weather followed by a location
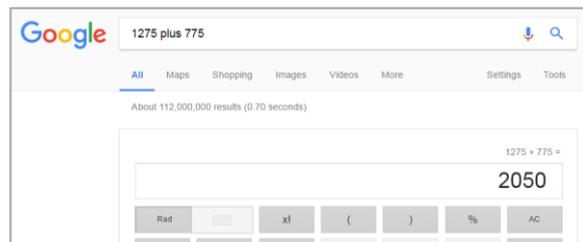e.g. Weather Torquay

Dictionary:

Type: define followed by the word you want to define e.g. Define penicillin

For quality purposes check which source the definition has come from.

Calculator:

Type: calculation in search box
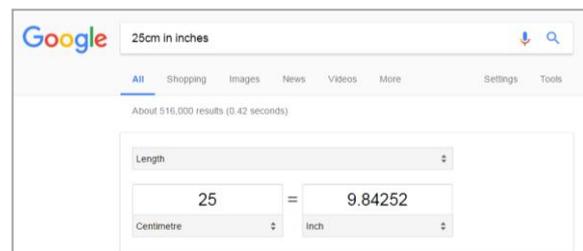e.g. 1275 plus 775

Fill in the blank:

Type: *
e.g. Penicillin was discovered by *
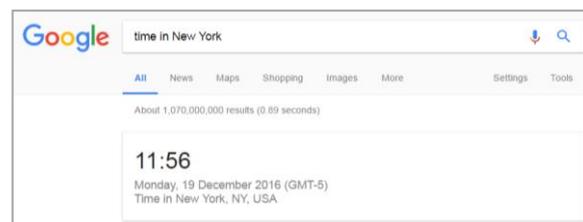NB: it's important check the quality of the source

Unit conversion:

Type: units for conversion
e.g. 25 cm in inches

Time:

Type: Time in location
e.g. time in New York

And more........

Click on the 'more' option (found in the top black bar) for more handy tools such as Google Translate (quickly translate text from one language to another) and Google Calendar.

Trust Library, Torbay Hospital, Torquay, TQ2 7AA library.sdhct@nhs.net 01803 656700
P:\teaching\Courses current\BiteSizes\Current BiteSizes\Google Tips\Google tips handout.doc
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