

Video Transcript: **Google@UNB Libraries**

Part 2 of 5: **How Google Thinks**

Have you ever wondered why a Google search gets so many results? Part of the reason has to do with what Google is doing with what you type in. Here are a few things to remember so that you can focus your searching:

Boolean Operator AND

Google automatically connects the words you type with the Boolean operator *AND*. So if you type *kayak quebec*, Google will search for both those words in various websites, automatically looking for them together.

Word Stems

Google automatically attaches suffixes to the words you type, which can greatly inflate your result numbers. For example, *mind game* will find *mind*, *minder*, *mindings*, and *game*, *gaming*, *gamer*, or *games*. You can turn this off by putting a *plus sign* (+) before the word or *double quotation marks* (“ ”) around a phrase.
e.g. *+mind* or *+game* or “*mind game*”

Stop Words

Google automatically excludes stop words from your search. Stop words are common words, such as *in*, *the*, *about*, or *a*. You can keep them in by putting a *plus sign* (+) before the word or *double quotation marks* (“ ”) around a phrase.

For example, if I want to find the phrase “a as in aardvark,” which starts with 3 stop words, putting the phrase within double quotation marks will ensure that I find THAT phrase, and that the first 3 words are not excluded.

e.g. *monkey +in +the middle* or “*monkey in the middle*”

Ranking of Words/Search Terms

Google does interesting things with the results of your search:

It ranks output by looking for your words first *in phrases*, then *close together*, and then *in the order typed*. More importantly, Google *ranks output* in a sort of popularity contest, with frequently-visited sites appearing at the top of the list. This is why Wikipedia entries are often near the top of your Google results page.

Bear in mind that the information you need *may not be at the most popular sites*, and that you may need to *scroll through* several pages to find good material. It is also important to consider which concepts in your search are more important, so that you can *enter your search terms in THAT order*.

Boolean Operator OR

If you want to combine terms with the Boolean operator OR, you must put it in CAPITAL LETTERS. For example, this search

“new brunswick” OR “nova scotia” OR “atlantic provinces”

will find material that mentions either the province of New Brunswick OR Nova Scotia OR the Atlantic provinces.

**Note that we’re putting our phrases in “double quotation marks” to force them to be found together. Some of these sites are about *Nova Scotia*, some mention *New Brunswick*, and some might mention *all 3 terms*, but *ONE* of those terms will show up on each of these page.

Minus Sign (-)

If you want to *exclude* concepts from your search, use the *minus sign (-)*. Imagine here that you want to find material on the *corvette class* of *SHIP*, but don’t want to wade through material about the *corvette CAR*. If we enter search terms, using *the minus sign (-) to exclude words*,

corvette –car –automobile –drive –wheel –hp

our search for corvette should exclude any page that mentions the word *car*, *automobile*, *drive*, *wheel*, or *horse power*. It is not an exact science, and some material may still turn up, but very quickly you get down to material that deals with corvette *class of ship* rather than the corvette *car*.

This video is available at: <http://www.lib.unb.ca/research/video/2Google@unb.html>

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