

Expand Your Searches

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If you are one of those people who uses Google™ only for simple searches, listen up!

Tonight we'll list a few of the things you are missing; some capabilities that may be really useful (or not).

Improve the way you use Google™

Pay attention to the details. Although Google™ often runs singular and plural searches automatically, try both forms of a word if you're not sure which is more appropriate for your query. The order of keywords is important, because Google™ considers the first word most important, the second word next, and so on. Thus, **Brown Family** gives you genealogy sites, different from the results **Family Brown**, which shows a musical band. Google™ ignores most small words, or stop words, such as the following:

I, an, for, from, how, of, in, is, it, the, and where

among others. If you need these words, place them in quotes, such as "I, Robot" by Isaac Asimov. Consider this well-known phrase:

"to be or not to be"

All of the words are stop words, so put them in quotes. Putting them in quotes will give you so many results which reference the oft-quoted phrase, yet only a few include the word, **Denmark**. At the bottom of your results page, there is a wonderful link to "Search within results." This allows you to narrow your search further.

Boolean Operators are familiar to those of us who went beyond Arithmetic in secondary school or have experience in querying databases. Google™ uses them and so should you. You can also substitute for **AND**, **OR** and **NOT** the symbols **+** | and **-**, respectively. Be sure to capitalize **OR** and **AND** or they become stop words.

Google's 10 word limit can be a real drag. If you need to find an exact phrase you can use word wildcards to reduce the stop words in quotation marks. Suppose you want the sentence, "The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here," you can get it with the following:

"* world * little note * long remember * * * here, * * * never forget * * * *"

Kewl, huh?

Among the many reasons why Google™ is the most popular search engine in the world, research is probably the most important. [The Google Labs](#) are constantly developing more ways to make the gigantic database even more useful to searchers.

Here is an overview of some of the handy tools available.

#1: The Google Toolbar™

If you are a regular Google™ user (a few searches per session) and you don't have the Google Toolbar™ installed, ***WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU?***

It is a simple, unobtrusive toolbar that installs in Internet Explorer™ and gives you Google™ search capability without going to Google's search page. It also suppresses pop-up ads, fills in forms, links to your blog and has a little drop menu that links to about everything Google™ has or does.

It is free and very easy to install; even James Carville could do it. Go to [Google Toolbar](#) for more info and installation.

Also note that many of the very kewl capabilities listed below are instantly available only if you have the Toolbar installed; otherwise, you have to go to the Google™ search page. (Don't make me tell you twice.)

#2: Advanced Search

If tossing a few keywords at Google™ isn't working for you — most likely resulting in too many returns that are not really what you are looking for — try the advanced search page of Google™. It lets you use many advanced capabilities via a form and narrow your search down.

It is available directly from the Google Toolbar or at [Google's Advanced Search](#).

Tip o' the Dae: For Netscape® Navigators — Bookmark the page; find it in your "Favorites" folder; right-click the listing; use "Send to ... Desktop" to create a handy desktop icon for this little jewel. You can also do this for many of the other capabilities in our list.

#3: Advanced Search Operators

The advanced operators either modify normal searches or perform specialized searches. These include Boolean operators, information operators such as "define" or "stocks," and operators that restrict searches in various ways. Currently, there are about a dozen of these operators.

Check them out at [Google Operators](#) for more info.

#4: Google News™

Google News™ is a very mature automated news aggregator that polls 5,000 sources and groups the results in major categories such as Top Stories, World, U.S., Business, Sci/Tech, Sports, Entertainment, and Health.

Also, it supports searches of the 5,000 news sources and gives much more current results than regular Google™ searches. Searches can be sorted by relevance or date. It, too, has an advanced news search at [Google Advanced News Search](#).

It may not be as titillating (nor crass) as Drudge but it is much more comprehensive, updated regularly and tends to cover real news.

You can visit [About Google News](#) for more info and [Google News™ for the news page](#).

#5: Phone Book™

You can use the regular Google™ search box as a phone book and find publicly listed phone numbers of individuals and businesses in the U.S. Most of us have tried this afore, so now try this: Enter your OWN phone number with area code. Now you see why we advise people NOT to give out their number in chat rooms.

Go to [Google Features™](#) for more info.

#6: Spell Checker™

Use the regular Google™ search box as a spell checker by simply typing in the word. If it is misspelled, Google™ will respond with: "Did you mean ...". Because Google™ uses its Internet database to support this feature, it includes proper names not usually included in spell check applications.

#7: Language Tools™

This feature will translate a web page or a "snippet" into English and a few other languages. Currently, it supports English, French, Spanish, German, Italian and Portuguese, which is nice for me because my French is quite lame. The translations are on the "rough" side (word by word), but usually good enough to understand what is written.

Try [Language Tools™](#) to learn more.

#8: Street Maps™

The Street Maps™ capability of Google™ is actually just an easier way to use existing Map applications (such as Yahoo!® Maps and MapQuest®) by simply typing an address into the regular Google™ search box. When Google™ recognizes it as an address, it will list the Map apps first and the listing will take you directly to your map — no need to go to the app and fill in a form.

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#9: Google Deskbar™

This new Google™ tool supports searches from within any Windows™ app without having to go to a browser. You use a hotkey and selected text to access Google™ search from anywhere. I have it installed on my Windows Task bar for search term entry.

Go to [Google DeskBar™](#) for more info and installation.

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#10: Google Keys

You can navigate Google™ without a mouse! This is good news for those suffering from the repetitive strain of much mouse clicking. Or like me, your mouse dies and you still need something from Google™ until you replace the mouse.

Press [K] on the search results page after a search on the Google Keys™ page, and colorful balls appear next to the first result.

Move up and down using [I] and [K], move left and right using [J] and [L]. Hit "Enter" to go to a site.

Check out [Google Keys™](#)

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#11: Google Viewer™

If you a visually-oriented searcher, such as I, as opposed to plain text, Google Viewer™ is for you! It displays your search results as a slide show.

Google™ shows each page five seconds and a short text description next to it. Click on the hare to speed up and the tortoise to slow down. Very user friendly for something so Greek! **Alert:** this Google Labs toy doesn't always work. You can see if it is working today at [Google Viewer™](#), but I prefer Copernic Search Agent.

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#12: Google Voice Search™

Search the web using your phone—if you like. Call Google's Voice Search™ at +1 650 318 0165 (US phone number) and follow the instructions. Then click the link on the Google Voice Search™ page and watch your results appear.

There may be many uses for this technology, but right now there are also some drawbacks. Phoning the States to search the Web is expensive for those who are not US residents. Indeed, it is a toll call even if you do live in the US. Also, voice recognition technology is not yet as advanced as it appears on the telly and you may have some problems making the computer at Google understand your query. Especially if your diction is as bad as Marlon Brando's was.

You can visit it at [Google Voice Search™](#)

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#13: Google Synonyms

Google™ allows you to extend your search to synonyms. Enter a tilde before a keyword, and Google™ will display pages that include words that have a similar meaning. Google™ may also display variations of the same word (plural, ing-form, etc.)

Example: To search for *browser help* as well as *browser guides* and *tutorials*, enter browser ~help in the search field.

#14: (Froogle™) now Google™ Product Search

Google™ Product Search is a price comparison tool. I really dislike shopping! Having said that, I will mention that I use Google™ Product Search to avoid it. The results are sorted by their relevancy to your search — no sponsored positions. You can sort the results by price and exclude items with prices over a certain limit. European [Kellkoo™](#) is testing a similar service, and the American old-timer Dealtime™ has launched the new Shopping.com comparison shopping search service. Online shopping is clearly seen as an important revenue generator. (Duh, huh?)

[Froogle™](#)

#15: Google Glossary™

Use the Web as your dictionary! Most of us already use this function. Google Glossary™ will search the Net for you and come back with definitions of all kinds of words and terms.

Google Glossary™ will find the meaning of slang expressions and specialized technical terms. Now all you need is your "notebook." The days of carrying around huge volumes of dictionaries and thesauruses are over. (Like you did that, right?) Of course, AOL provides this service, too.

Keyword: dictionary. [Google Glossary™](#)

#16: Google WebQuotes™

Google WebQuotes™ will add comments that other websites have to every result that appears when you do a search. This is a good way to find out about the reliability of a firm, a service or an institution, when it is working. I've tried to use it for evidence verification in genealogical research. Alas, this one still needs work.

Go to [Google WebQuotes™](#)

#17: Google Earth™

Google™ now allows you to view satellite shots of any location on the planet. The most-talked about feature is useful for any number of genealogical reasons. You can hover your own house and zoom right in. Search for schools, farms, homes, and buildings. Get driving directions to places to visit and research. Tilt and rotate the view to see 3D terrain and buildings. Save your searches in your family histories.

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A control panel at the top of the page lists the URL other relevant ordering information.

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Visit [Google Earth](#)

#18: Google Sets

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I love this feature: it organizes words into sets of related terms.

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For instance, you can type in the townships of your ancestors and get a whole list of other, nearby townships. Choose a small set of results and receive around five strong suggestions or choose a large set and see everything Google™ finds.

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Try it at [Google Sets](#).

#19: Google Scholar has a New Advanced Search

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Gary Price has something kewl for us. A pointer to Google Scholar's new advanced search, available at [Google Scholar](#). Using the advanced search we can search for articles written in a particular journal, by a particular author, or within a particular time span. (Can you say "bibliographies?")

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I didn't notice any stop words. This means if you were curious about what's actually in Google Scholar, you could search for no keywords and a journal keyword like "the" and see what pops up. Or the word "Journal" or "Diary."

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Date searching is hosed. I searched for 2009 in my date span (no keywords again) and got several results. Google Scholar may be picking up page numbers instead of dates.

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The advanced search does not have a feature I'd like to see. When I'm searching, I change my searches so that I'm using a level of query relevant to what I'm searching; if I'm searching a full-text engine, my queries are longer than if I'm searching a searchable subject index. Google Scholar has citations (small pools of data), articles (medium-sized pools of data) and books (large pools of data). It's hard to shape queries when there are so many different sizes of information being searched. We need an option that lets us narrow our search to books, articles, citations, *etc*.

#20: Google Books™

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This is probably the next-most publicized of the new features. You can search books for information and even download some entire books. It is an on-going project which already includes hundreds of genealogical books. I recommend visiting at least once a month for newer additions.

#21: Google Notebook™

This feature can be your online Clooz™ or ByGones™ software agent. Add clippings of text, images and links from web pages to your Google Notebook™ without ever leaving your browser window. Create multiple notebooks, divide them into family sections, and drag-and-drop your notes to stay organized. You can access your Google Notebooks from any computer by using your Google Accounts login. And, you can share your Google Notebook™ with the world by making it public.

Check out [Google Notebook](#)

And finally, #22: Google Calc

Enter an equation in the search textbox and press enter. Google™ will calculate for you, if the expression is legal! Try $5280 * 12$ and learn the number of inches in a mile. The arithmetical expressions are $+$ $-$ $*$ and $/$. Use the circumflex $^$ for exponents, and YES, Google™ honors parentheses! So now you can enter $(234 + 2^{16}) * (86/9)$ and Google™ will perform the functions inside parentheses first.

As you can see, this isn't your father's Google™ anymore. So try a few of these functions and become even more productive.

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Google for Educators

Which leads us to the final news item of last week: [Google for Educators](#).

Google for Educators is a web portal for teachers, telling them how to use various Google services in the class room.

In various articles Google suggests how their services may be used as teaching tool. The tools covered are:

- Web Search
- Google Earth
- Google Book Search
- Google Maps
- Google Video
- Google Docs & Spreadsheets
- Blogger
- Google SketchUp (modeling software for designers)
- Google Calendar
- Picasa (for pictures)
- Google Personalized (home page)
- Homepage

Google Apps for Education Not only can you use these services individually (like in using Google Maps in geography lessons). You can also combine them into an all-encompassing content management system using tools like the personalized home page (for your class), a shared calendar (for planning) and Picasa and Google Video to share the results of class projects.

But if you have a project management system like this one for the class room, what is to stop you from using the same technology for managing business projects, public offices or collaboration across institutional borders? The answer is, of course, nothing.

Google may actually manage to give away the successor to **Lotus Notes** for free.