

17 Tips for Using Google Search for Genealogy

Normally when people think of Google, they think of the search engine. As genealogy researchers, it is imperative that we learn to use the Google search engine effectively, since it can help us find ancestors, relevant documents, and many more pertinent things to help find our ancestors.

Using the Google Search Engine Effectively for Genealogy Research:

- A basic search in Google requires us to enter a search criteria in the Search box. This can be something simple such as a full name or surname. Or a much more complicated entry. When using multiple words in the criteria it is assumed to be a Boolean AND. For example, *Word1 Word2 Word3* as your search criteria means that all words must appear in order to provide a positive search result.
- If you are searching for a multi-word phrase that must appear as the phrase, simply, put double quotes before and after the phrase. For example, *"Word1 Word2 Word3"*
- If you wish to exclude a word from your search, simply put a minus sign before the word that you wish to exclude. For example, *John Dulles -Foster*
- Want to include synonyms in your search? Just place a tilde symbol in front of the word that you are looking for a synonym. For example *Word1 ~Word2*
- To search within a specific site, enter the word *site:* in front of the url of the site. For example *site:youtube.com*
- To exclude results from a specific site because you have already searched it or it dominates the results and you don't wish to see results from that site, just put a minus sign in front of the site term. In our previous example where you want to exclude results from YouTube, just enter *-site:youtube.com*
- Use the OR operator if you wish to include multiple words or phrases in a search. For example *Lincoln OR "Emancipation Proclamation"*
- Although Google's searches with multiple words assume an AND operation, you can use the AND operator. This is useful when you have a more complicated criteria that has a combination of OR and AND operations in your search criteria.
- Wildcard searches can be performed by entering an asterisk (*) in your search criteria.
- To return a prior version of a web page enter *cache:xyz.com*. It is different from the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine. Google presents just the most recent version of a web page, whereas the Wayback Machine presents multiple versions.
- To restrict results to specific filetypes, enter your criteria as follows: *searchword filetype pdf*
- To find results from related websites enter *related:website1.com*
- To find results for a search for a word within the title, enter *intitle:cemetery*
- To find results for multiple words that appear within the title, enter *allintitle:cemetery burial*
- To find results for a word (or text string) that appears in a url, enter *allinurl:textstring*
- To perform a proximity search, i.e. finding words within a specified number of words from one another, use the AROUND function. For example, *Word1 AROUND(5) Word2* finds occurrences where Word1 is within 5 words from Word2
- To restrict results to a range of years, enter *[year1].[year2]* in your search criteria