New Mexico Broadband Program

Introduction to the Internet

Module 2

Using Search Engines
Evaluating Websites
Class Goals

- Develop understanding of and skill in use of Search Engines
- Develop understanding of and skill in evaluating Websites
Search Engines and Google

When we search for information on the Web, we use online tools called **search engines**.

There are many different search engines, including Yahoo and Bing.

The most popular search engine, and the one we will use in this class, is Google.
Google helps us sort through the vast number of websites that exist on the internet. It helps us select only those which might have the information we are looking for.
How to access Google

We access Google in the same way we would any other website, by typing the web address, or URL, into the address bar.

Type **www.google.com** into the address bar.
Type **www.google.com** into the address bar.
The Google Home Page will come up on your screen. It looks very different from other Home Pages. That’s because Google is a working site more than it is an information site. The space on the Home Page you will be using is the central “search box.”
How to Search on the Internet

- Internet searches use key words as indicators to guide a search.
- To do a search, you must type key words into the search box in the center of the screen.
- Key words define the subject of your search.
Keywords

The key words you choose shape the information you get back from Google.

If you search on only one keyword, your search will be very broad. You will probably get millions of results—called *hits*—since you have searched the entire Internet for sites that contain that word.
How to use key words in searches

Let’s see what it looks like if you search using a single key word.

Type “horse” into the Google search box.

When you press the Enter key, your search will be conducted and completed in an instant.
Searching with Google

Type “horse” into the Google search box.
Your Google search results page will look like this.
Take a moment to orient to the page layout.
Each result in the list provides brief information.

Horse Supplies, Dewormers, Equine Supplements & Tack - Horse.com
www.horse.com/
Horse.com is the source for everything equine. From Horse Tack, including saddles, bridle, bits, pads and more, to Horse Supplies, such as first aid, ...
To open the website for any item in the search results, place your cursor over the link and click once.

Horse Supplies, Dewormers, Equine Supplements & Tack - Horse.com
www.horse.com/
Horse.com is the source for everything equine. From Horse Tack, including saddles, bridles, bits, pads and more, to Horse Supplies, such as first aid, ...
Notice that Google tells you how many results your search produced.
Searches vary enormously depending on the keywords we choose.

Because Google only searches for the words you give it, and not the thought behind your choice, it is not always very “smart” about finding what you want.

Google is like any tool – you need to learn how to use it effectively!
Narrowing Your Search

The key to a successful search, in which you find the information you want, is refining it.

You can refine your search by narrowing the focus of the information for which you search.
Narrowing Your Search

When we narrow our search, we often add more words to specify more precisely what we are searching for. With more words in the search box, the search engine will pull up fewer “hits,” since it will only select those sites that contain this combination of words.

Even though we will have fewer “hits,” each “hit” will be more accurately targeted to the information we want to know.
Narrowing Your Search

For example, instead of looking for information about “horses,” you might search for information about “using Clydesdale mares as team penning horses.”
Notice that when you use more focused key words, the number of your search results decreases.
What could we do to narrow this search in order to get fewer than 1000 results?
Focused ideas make a focused search

But narrowing your search may still not give you the information for which you are looking.

Conducting a good search means being clear and focused about what you want to find.

This means your ideas and thoughts must be clear and focused before you begin looking for information.
This is especially true when you are looking for information for a research paper or a report for work.

You will want to find and use information that refines your ideas and supports your argument.

You do not want to find and use information that you just happened to stumble on!!
Practice focused searching

Let’s do a practice search.

• Use one of the topics listed on your handout as a starting point.
• Determine how this search could be focused. What key words and phrases would help you narrow this search?
• Continue to narrow the search until you have fewer than 1000 hits.
Narrowing a search

Choose a topic from your handout and narrow the search to under 1000 results.
Evaluating information on the internet

Knowing how to do a good search on the Internet is not the only key to using the Internet well.

We also need to know how to make smart choices by evaluating and selecting the information we retrieve.
Evaluating information on the internet

The great thing about the Internet is that it is an open resource that anyone can use to post information, writings, photos, or opinions.

However, this also means that anyone having the necessary technical skill can put something up on the Internet.
Because of this, you have to learn to be discerning when you use the Internet. Not all of the information is equally valuable. You must learn to look at each website with a critical eye and determine for yourself if the content is credible. One factor that helps us do this is website domain.
Understanding Domains

Domain refers to website type. It identifies the key purpose of the site.

The domain is indicated by the letters immediately following the period after the name of the site.

www.etsy.com

Domain
Domains come in several types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>What It Generally Indicates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.com</td>
<td>Commercial entity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.edu</td>
<td>Restricted to educational institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.gov</td>
<td>Government-run websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.net</td>
<td>Was for network associations; now for commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.org</td>
<td>Originally for nonprofit organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>Indicates a personal site</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identifying Domains

Domains help us understand the purpose of the website we exploring.

- A “.com” is a commercial site, so we know it will be selling a product or service.
- A “.gov” will be a government site.
- A “.edu” is an educational institution of some sort.
Understanding domains

What are the domains of the following sites?

- [www.unm.edu](http://www.unm.edu)
- [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)
- [www.naaccp.org](http://www.naaccp.org)
Evaluating websites

Understanding domains is only one part of evaluating a website.
We can also evaluate a website by looking critically at several key features of its content and design.
To do this, we can use a checklist that will help us consider all the aspects of a website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>• What’s the purpose of the website?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorship</td>
<td>• Who is the author of the site?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectivity</td>
<td>• How objective is the site?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currency</td>
<td>• How current is the site?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>• Is the site responsible with the information provided?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>• Are the language and organization of the site clear?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>• Does the information appear to be accurate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluating websites

Sample website 1
Sample website 2
Sample website 3
Sample website 4
Sample website 5
Sample website 6

Work individually or with a partner to evaluate the websites on your handout,
Comparing websites

We can often achieve the best understanding of good and bad quality by comparing two items.

Let’s compare two websites on the same topic.
Comparing websites

Sample website 1

Sample website 2

Work individually or with a partner to compare the websites given above and on your handout.
Review what we learned

• Search engines
  • Key terms
• Focused searches
  • Domains
• Evaluating websites
• Comparing websites
We appreciate the time you spent with us.
We hope to see you at the next training!

These materials were created collaboratively by the New Mexico Department of Information Technology, Fast Forward New Mexico, and the New Mexico State Library, under grants provided by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. These materials are not to be used for profit.

Connecting you to a world of opportunities