Searching the Internet

by Sophia

In this lesson, you will learn where you can search for information on the internet and review strategies to help you get the results you want. You will also see how efficient web searches can increase your productivity.

Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Search Sites and Search Engines
2. Effective Searching Strategies
3. Your Search Results
   a. Filters
   b. Check for Reliability

1. Search Sites and Search Engines

There is a tremendous amount of information on the internet. **Search sites** are special websites that use search engines to help you find what you are looking for online. You may hear someone use the terms search site and search engine to mean the same thing, but that is not exactly true. **Search engines** are actually software and it is this software that that allows search sites to work.

You have most likely heard of or used some of the popular search sites below.

Like browsers, you most likely have a favorite search site. By using your favorite website frequently, it will use algorithms to remember what websites have been useful for you. For instance, if you study history and you search "Africa," you will likely find articles about the history of Africa. Conversely, you may have a friend who frequently travels. They could also use Google to search "Africa" and would likely find article related to travel to Africa. By using the same search engine, your searches will provide results that are relevant to the information you're seeking and will save you time.

IN CONTEXT

Navigating search engines effectively will help you quickly find the information you need. For instance, imagine that you're preparing to graduate and are looking for a job. Search engines can help you find job opportunities, research companies to which you're interested in applying, network with others in the field, and create an online professional portfolio.

Add video: *(Strayer Week 2) Description of company that connects women who have been out of the workforce with employers*

📄 **TERMS TO KNOW**

Search Site
Websites that use search engines to help users locate specific information on the internet.

Search Engine
Software programs used by search sites to find relevant internet content based on users' search terms.

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2. Effective Searching Strategies

While you'll likely eventually obtain relevant results with a search engine, there are practices you can put in place to find these results more quickly, increasing your productivity:

- **Use multiple keywords**

  - To use the previous example, you may do a search on Africa. However, you'll obtain more accurate results if you use multiple **keywords**, such as "history of African music" or "hotels in South Africa."
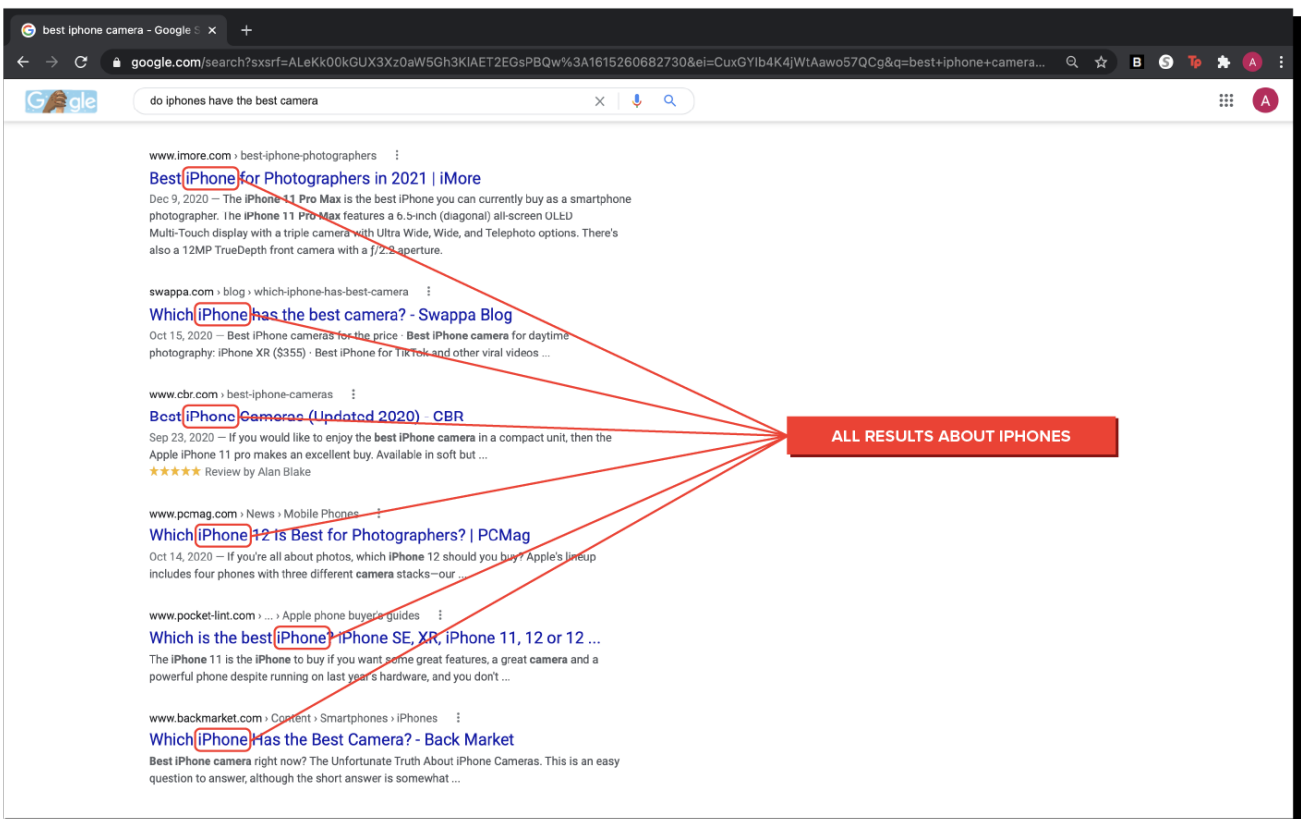
- **Use keywords that are specific**

  - For instance, if you're looking for a recipe for chili, you'll obtain better results with "chili recipes" than you would by simply searching for "chili." You can narrow down your search even more if you'd like, for instance, "dairy-free chili recipes" or "spicy chili recipes." Additionally, if you're looking for the definition of a word, such as "IP address," you'll want to search "definition of IP address" or "IP address definition" rather than simply searching for "IP address."
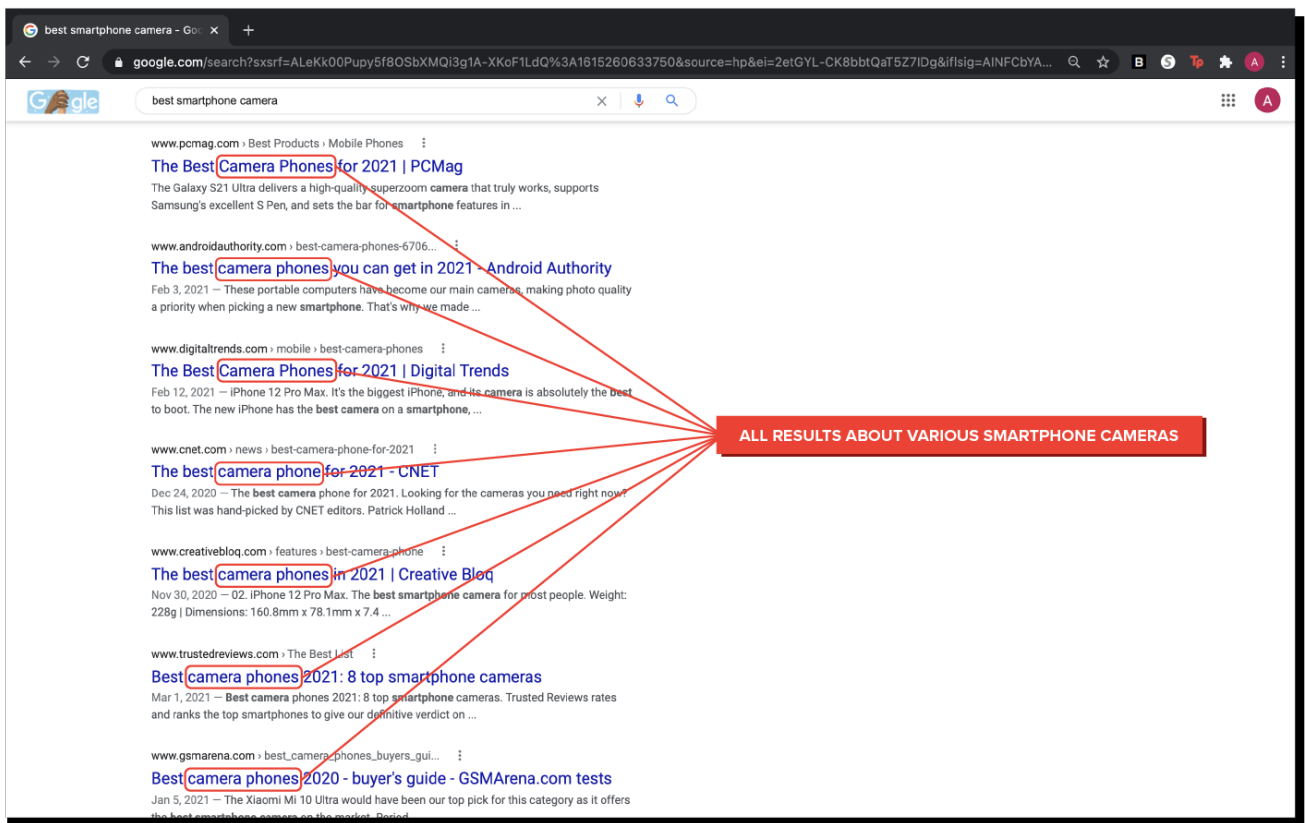
- **Use synonyms**

  - If you're not obtaining the results you want, try using synonyms. If you're trying to compare the best household cleaner, you may try searching for "cleaner" or "disinfectant."

- **Stay neutral**

  - Avoid using comparative words such as "better," "best," "faster, et cetera. These terms will likely pull up biased articles. For instance, searching for "iPhone best camera" will likely produce results showing that the iPhone has the best camera of all smartphones, when this may not be the case. Instead, a better search would be "best smartphone camera." See the example below:

HINT

If you're having trouble coming up with synonyms, you can use thesaurus.com

TERM TO KNOW

Keywords
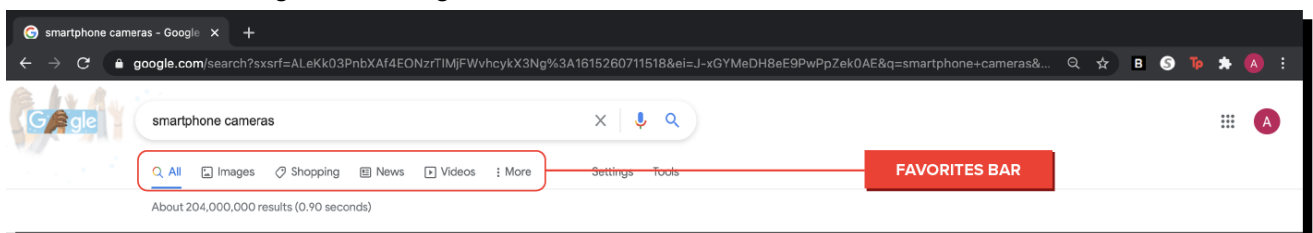Specific words or phrases associated with your topic in an internet search.

3. Your Search Results

Each search engine displays results in a particular way. Some may sort by date updated. Others may display your results based on popularity. Regardless of the order of your results, there are ways to make sure you rely on the most accurate and reliable sources.

3a. Filters

One way to find accurate search results is to use the filters on search engines. This will narrow your search to just find the type of resource you're looking for, such as an image or a news story. The image below shows some filters in the Google search engine:

Using filters will provide you with the most relevant results for your search, saving you time and increasing your productivity.

3b. Check for Reliability

One of the most important aspects to remember when searching the internet is that the internet contains a lot of unreliable and biased information. While internet filters can help you narrow down your searches, they won't weed out unreliable results. Recognizing the signs of a trustworthy source can help you use the internet to obtain relevant and accurate information. Reliable sources are generally government sources or sources from highly credible and esteemed institutions. On the other hand, sites such as Wikipedia have web pages that are not always written by credible writers.

In addition to using credible websites, you'll also want to check a variety of sources. If an issue tends to be biased, such as a political issue, you'll want to read various perspectives. Additionally, information on several topics, such as technology, are updated quickly, so articles written even six months ago may be outdated. Checking a variety of sources helps you obtain the most accurate and reliable information.

Using unreliable sources will cost you time in the long run because you will likely make decisions based on inaccurate information. For instance, if you're using search engines to prepare for a career, you may find outdated information about the best steps you can take to maximize your chances of being offered a job. Or, you may use unreliable sources to write a paper. In this case, the paper will likely be returned to you to write again. You will save yourself a great deal of time and be more productive

 by finding the most accurate sourced information.

▶ ☑ Productivity: Apply Your Skill

You are looking for your next job. What types of search engines will you use to ensure that you are being productive in this process? What keywords will you use? How will you determine that you are obtaining the best information available?

☑ SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned the difference between **search sites** and **search engines**. You gained a better understanding of the importance of **effective search strategies**. You also reviewed key factors to consider when it comes to **your search results**. To get the results you want, you can use **filters**. Once you have some results, you then need to **check for reliability** to make sure you rely on reputable and verified sources. Finally, you learned how the use of effective searches make you more productive in your personal and professional life.

Happy searching!

📄 TERMS TO KNOW

Key Words
   Specific words or phrases associated with your topic in an internet search.

Search Engine

Software programs used by search sites to find relevant internet content based on users' search terms.

Search Site

Websites that use search engines to help users locate specific information on the internet.