

**Africa Online, English Language Education:
Using Web Resources to Develop Classroom Content-Based Materials
University of Oregon, American English Institute**

Strategies for Effective Web Searches

Searching for information on the World Wide Web can be time-consuming. Following are a few basic principles to help guide you to useful resources.

1. Know what you are searching for.

Identify your purpose (the reason why you are doing the search and the audience that will use the web sites that you find). Also identify the keywords that you will use. Be as specific as possible. For example, "education" will give you millions of overly general websites, whereas "education + Dakar, Senegal" will give you more focused results. If you get zero results, check your spelling or try a synonym.

2. Know what search tools can do.

Search tools are still evolving. There is no one search tool that can access all web sites that are available. Three commonly found types of tools are:

Directories, which organize web sites by topics and subtopics.

Search engines, which organize web sites according to titles and/or keywords.

Meta-search engines, which search several other search engines at once and give you a combined set of results.

Directories are good for very specific topics, or in cases where you want to explore a cluster of specific topics. Search engines are also good for specific topics; they tend to sort according to how often the web sites have been accessed by others, or how close the match seems to be to the keywords that you specified. Meta-search engines are good for hard-to-find topics. Getting good results requires experimenting with and gaining knowledge of the tool(s) you are using.

3. Know how to “talk” to a search engine.

There are several search engine “languages.” When in doubt, read the search engine's "tips" or "help" section for information on making the best use of that tool.

4. Try more than one search tool.

If you don't like the results you get from one search tool, try another one.

5. Save your results.

Doing research on the Web can take a great deal of time. Remember to use your web browser (e.g. Netscape or Internet Explorer) to "bookmark" or add web sites that you like to your "favorites" list so you can easily return to them. You can also copy and paste web site addresses from your web browser into a list in a word processing document.

Where to Find some Web Search Tools

Directories:

*Lycos	http://www.lycos.com/
*Yahoo!	http://www.yahoo.com/
Open Directory	http://dmoz.org/

* These sites also have a search engine option now.

Search Engines (General topics):

AltaVista	http://www.altavista.com/
Google	http://www.google.com/
InfoSeek	http://infoseek.go.com/
Northern Light	http://www.nlsearch.com/

Topic-specific Search Engines:

Audio/Video	http://www.streamsearch.com
Infomine	http://infomine.ucr.edu/
iTools	http://www.itools.com/
Photos, sound	http://image.altavista.com/cgi-bin/avncgi
WWW Virtual Library	http://vlib.org/

Meta-search Engines:

Ask Jeeves	http://www.askjeeves.com/
Dogpile	http://www.dogpile.com/
Mamma	http://www.mamma.com/
OneSeek	http://www.oneseek.com/
The Info	http://www.theinfo.com/

Assignment

Choose one or more tasks from the following "menu." Email your results to your class "buddy" or "buddies."

1. Try a search with a keyword or an author's name from one of the web sites on this week's syllabus. Did you find any related web site materials of interest?
2. Try a search with the publishing company or author's name from one of the class texts that you use. Did it lead you to any use supplementary materials?
3. Try a search using the name of the city or school district in which you work. Add keywords about topics or subjects that you teach (e.g. Pretoria + "cross-cultural training"). Did you discover any local resources or people that were surprising?