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Internet Searching: terms and tips

Terminology

A browser is a program that gets you to the Internet and allows you to view websites. The most common browsers are Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, and Safari.

The most important parts of the browser are the back/forward buttons, the address bar, the tabs, the home button, and the favorites button.

The address bar is located near the top left of the browser window. It acts as a navigation tool. Typing a URL (Uniform Resource Locator) or Web address in the address bar and pressing Enter on the keyboard navigates to and displays a website. Note that the Web address or URL is not always the same as the name of the website.

The back/forward buttons allow you to navigate back and forth between websites which have been viewed during a single browsing session.

Tabs are pieces of the browser which allow you to view multiple websites at the same time.

The home page is the website the browser opens first.

The favorites/bookmarks button displays a list of websites you select.

Internet

The Internet is comprised of billions of websites. A browser is a program that gets you to the Internet and allows you to view websites. A search engine is a website which helps you locate other websites.

Think of a browser as a car or cell phone. The browser is the vehicle which gets you to the websites. Common browsers include Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, and Safari.

Think of a search engine as a GPS unit, the 411 Information line, or a directory. The search engine is the tool which helps you find the addresses for websites. Common search engines include Google, Bing, Yahoo!, and Ask.com.

Searching

To search, open a browser such as Internet Explorer. Next, go to a search engine such as google.com. Finally, type in search terms and press Enter.

After completing a search, look at the results. Ads are included in results. These are typically found at the top, bottom, or along the sides of the page. Read the descriptions of the websites and look at the URLs (Web addresses).

Before going to a website, consider the source. Look at the domain. Common domains are .com, .net, .edu, .gov, and .org. Websites with a .edu or .gov domain often contain reliable information. Think about how you will use the information before determining whether or not Wikipedia (an online encyclopedia that anyone can modify) is an appropriate source. If the accuracy of the information you find is important, consider cross-referencing the information.

If you are looking for images, use an image search rather than a Web search.

Remember that the keywords you select have no context. For example, “windows” can refer to structures containing panes of glass or an operating system.

Refine your searches to find what you seek. Add additional terms to limit the search. Use synonyms if a term is not bringing up the desired results. Consider limiting your search to a specific website created by an authority on the topic.

Consider right clicking on links to open them in new tabs or new windows. This allows you to keep your original search open and continue reading while the new website loads.

Evaluating Results

Before trusting the information you find, evaluate the website you are using. Look at the domain. Sites ending in .edu or .gov may be more accurate than sites ending in .com or .net, because sites ending in .edu are created by educational institutions and sites ending in .gov are created by government entities.

Read the information on the site and decide if it seems accurate. Consider cross-referencing important information. Look for references, citations, or a bibliography on the site.

Beware of hoaxes.

Tips

- Look at the search results.
- Refine searches to produce more relevant results.
- Evaluate websites before trusting the information provided.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help.