There's more to searching the Internet than just Googling!

The skills that you need for effective Internet research include:

- Choosing an appropriate search engine
- Knowing how to create search strategies
- Evaluating the websites found
- Finding and recording citation details

Search engines

There are hundreds of search engines, and different types may be suitable for different needs. The main types are:

- **Robots/crawlers/spiders** – use computer programs that automatically search the internet and add what they find to indexes, e.g. Google.com, Bing.com, Duckduckgo.com
- **Directories** – content is found, added and organized by human beings, e.g. DMOZ.com
- **Metasearch** – search many search engines at once e.g. Dogpile.com, Ask.com, Search.com
- **Specialised search engines and gateways** e.g. Google Scholar (scholar.google.com.au), Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au), Joboutlook.gov.au, HealthDirect (healthdirect.gov.au/health-topics) or the databases available via the library catalogue on our Databases page

Many search engines are hybrid, having both directory andcrawler features.

If you don’t find what you want using a particular search engine, try another. No search engine scans the whole of the Internet.

Be aware that results lists will often have advertising or sponsored sites at the top.

Search strategies

- When typing your words into a search engine, type everything in lower case, as most search engines ignore capitalisation, or may only pick up the capitalised word.

- Use similar words or phrases to find more information, especially if your initial search was not successful, e.g. try using prisoner instead of convict. Use a thesaurus for help.

- Put the most important word first.

- To search for a phrase, put double quotation marks around it, e.g. “julia gillard” or “gone with the wind”.

- Use a wildcard (*) to truncate words and get more results, e.g. cook* will find cook, cooks, cooking, cookery, Cook Islands etc.

- You can also use the * wildcard when you are not sure of the spelling, e.g. colo*r will find both color and colour.

- Many search engines offer advanced search, allowing you to expand or narrow your search with AND, OR or NOT:
e.g.

- cats AND dogs - will find only items that mention both
- cats OR dogs – will find items that mention either
- cats NOT dogs – will find items that mention cats, but exclude any that mention dogs

- Many engines have an images search function. Look for the Images link.
- Use refine function to narrow your search results.
- Look at the Search Tips or Help links for the engine you are using. Many have added features. For instance, when searching on Google go to Settings > Advanced Search to find many options for refining your searches.

Evaluating websites

Factors to consider are:

- **Authority** – Who is responsible for the website?
- **Currency** – When the website was created? Is it kept up to date?, Do the links work?
- **Accuracy** - The quality of the content
- **Objectivity** – Is there any bias? Is it a commercial (.com) web site?
- **Scope** – Is the information at the level that you want? Does it give you relevant information?
- **Purpose** – Does it inform, explain or try to persuade?
- **Design** – Is it attractive, readable and easy to navigate around?

For more information, see the TAFE SA Study Guide on evaluating websites.

Wikipedia

Be aware that wikipedia.org is not a recognised academic source. As anyone can add content to it, it is not considered authoritative. Use it as a starting place to give you an overview of a topic, and to find additional keywords. Use the links in the articles, or from the reference list at the bottom, to read and cite from the sources they have used.

Referencing

You must reference when you use Internet sources. Use the style recommended by your lecturer.

See the TAFE SA Study Guide ‘Use the Harvard Referencing System’.

For further information on using the Internet for research, try My Information Skills tafesa.libguides.com/myinfoskills or ask at your TAFE SA library!