A “search engine” can be used to find information. To search a search engine, you normally click or tap on a search box and type one or more words (ideas, names, places, etc.) describing what you want to research:

![Search Box](image)

(Tip: an “advanced” search option, if one is available, usually gives you better control over your search.)

There are many different kinds of search engines, including library catalogs, databases, online stores, and websites such as Bing.com, Google.com, and Yahoo.com. Each search engine produces different results.

Bing, Google, and Yahoo are three popular general search engines which can be useful if you are not yet aware of better options. General search engines can produce millions of results, many of them irrelevant!

Thankfully, there are many other specific search engines you can use. For example, MedlinePlus.gov can be used to locate health information, while NASA.gov can help you locate information on current and past space missions.

**Some advanced techniques to consider...**

To find words in a specific order, try putting “quotation marks” around the words. That sequence of words is considered a phrase (e.g. “Bill of Rights”). Most major search engines support phrase searches.

Certain words (known as “stop words”) are often ignored by some search engines. Words such as “and” and “the” and “this” can usually be omitted from your search terms – unless they are part of a phrase search.

In Google, quotation marks tell that search engine you want to include each word or phrase you quote in the results. In the past, Google required a plus (+) symbol before words or phrases to indicate they must be included.

Some search engines support advanced search commands. For example, at Bing and Google you can search for words and phrases in the titles of Web pages by using the special intitle: command (e.g. intitle:“Bill of Rights”).

Bing and Google also support both the site: and inurl: search commands. You can use site: to limit search results to certain websites (.gov for government websites, .org for organizations, .edu for universities), as in this advanced phrase search: “Bill of Rights” site:.gov

The inurl: command tells the search engine to search within URLs (Web addresses), as in inurl:NASA.

Google also supports the intitle: search command. You can use intitle: to search for websites whose titles contain words or phrases you specify, as in intitle:“Library Catalog”

Some search engines let you tell them what you do not want to see in search results. To do this, place a minus symbol (−) symbol before unwanted words or phrases. This can result in fewer yet possibly more relevant search results.

Some search engines (including many of our full-text article databases at www.thrall.org/databases), also offer a “search within these results” option, allowing you to apply new keywords to an existing set of search results.

See if a search engine offers a more specific search mode. For example, Bing, Google, and Yahoo offer image, video, and news search modes you can select. Even our library catalog offers a video search mode: thrall.org/videos

A few search engines offer customizable Preferences or Settings options you can use to tailor results based on language, content, and other criteria. If you don’t see a link for “preferences” or “settings,” look for a tiny gear button.

Try multiple search engines and compare their results. You can do this easily through Thrall’s home page (www.thrall.org) by clicking our “Web Search” link. You can also go to thrall.org/search and search by topic!

“Metasearches” such as Dogpile.com can send your searches to several engines and produce a combined list of results.

Browsing can be better than searching. Discover new sources, learn new terms and topics, and have fun exploring! Try it by going to thrall.org/guides or to thrall.org/readyref. If you’re a member of our library, also try thrall.org/databases

Remember: any information you need might not be online. Our librarians can help you! Please visit our Reference Department, or call 341-5461 for research assistance. You can also ask us a question online at www.thrall.org/ask