
Google
Dave & Malou's Guide to using
GOOGLE SEARCH!

THE COMPLETE GOOGLE SEARCH GUIDE!

1. UNDERSTANDING HOW GOOGLE SEARCH WORKS

Google Search is more than a box into which you type a few words. It understands search terms, related words, phrases, websites, locations, dates and the context of your query.

You can use special commands called search operators to tell Google precisely what you want to find.

For example, a basic search:

```
Brisbane historic buildings
```

Could return thousands of results.

A more targeted search:

```
Brisbane historic buildings heritage register site:qld.gov.au
```

Limits your search to Queensland Government websites.

An even more targeted search:

```
"historic buildings" Brisbane filetype:pdf site:qld.gov.au
```

Looks for PDF documents containing the exact phrase and the Brisbane keyword on Queensland Government websites.

The objective is to reduce irrelevant results and find useful information faster.

An important point: Google does not always return every matching page. Its results depend on what it has indexed, its ranking systems and the search filters you use.

2. BASIC SEARCHING TECHNIQUES

Before using advanced commands, learn how to construct a good search.

2.1 Use specific keywords

Broad searches usually produce broad results.

Example:

```
Brisbane history
```

A better search:

```
Brisbane Queensland history 1880s
```

More specific:

```
Brisbane Queensland commercial buildings 1880 1890 photographs
```

The more accurately you describe what you are looking for, the better your chances of finding relevant material.

2.2 Search using alternative words

Different websites may describe the same subject differently. For example, when researching an old building, try:

- Historic building
- Heritage building
- Former commercial premises
- Historic architecture
- Old shopfront
- Heritage-listed property
- Former industrial building

Example:

```
Brisbane historic shopfronts 1890s
```

Then try:

```
Brisbane heritage commercial architecture nineteenth century
```

This can uncover material that a single search misses.

2.3 Use the terminology likely to appear in the original document

If you are researching an old factory, search for the words likely to appear in historical records.

Instead of:

```
old Brisbane soft drink factory
```

Try:

```
Brisbane aerated water manufacturer 1900
```

Other useful historical terms include: Aerated waters, Cordial manufacturer, Mineral waters, Manufacturer, Proprietor, Warehouse, Establishment, Works, Premises, Industrial works. Historical terminology can make a substantial difference to your results.

2.4 Search for different spellings

Older documents may use different spellings or descriptions.

Examples:

```
Yeppoon Queensland history Yapoon Queensland history Moreton Bay history Moreton Bay District history
```

Try variations of names, spelling and historical place names.

2.5 Search using quotation marks around names

Example:

```
"Thomas Tristram" Brisbane
```

This is particularly useful when researching individuals, businesses, buildings and historical events.

3. SEARCHING FOR EXACT WORDS AND PHRASES

3.1 Double quotation marks ""

This is one of the most useful Google search techniques. Quotation marks tell Google to look for an exact word or phrase.

Examples:

```
"Roma Street Power Station" "Countess Street Power Station" "Thomas Tristram" "Brisbane Municipal Council" "Yeppoon Jetty"
```

When should you use this? Finding a person's name, locating a particular building, searching for an exact quotation, finding references to a business, locating an old newspaper article, checking whether a particular phrase appears in a document.

You can also combine multiple quoted phrases:

```
"Roma Street" "Countess Street" Brisbane
```

Tip: Exact phrase searching can exclude useful pages that use slightly different wording. If results are limited, remove the quotation marks and try again.

3.2 Search for a partial phrase

If you only remember part of a quotation, search for the words you know.

Example:

```
"the first electric street lights" Brisbane
```

If that produces nothing useful, try:

```
Brisbane first electric lighting Queen Street
```

Do not assume a historical quotation is accurate simply because Google finds it. Check the original document.

4. EXCLUDING UNWANTED WORDS AND WEBSITES

This is particularly useful when Google keeps showing results from websites you do not want.

4.1 The minus sign -

Put a minus sign immediately before a word to exclude results containing that term.

```
Jaguar -car
```

Other examples:

```
Brisbane history -football historic buildings Queensland -realestate old
photographs Brisbane -Pinterest refrigeration history -modern
```

Important: Do not put a space between the minus sign and the word being excluded. Correct: `Brisbane history -tourism` | Incorrect: `Brisbane history - tourism`

4.2 Exclude an entire website using -site:

The format is: `-site:website.com`

```
wireless security cameras -site:facebook.com historic Brisbane photographs -
site:facebook.com Queensland heritage buildings -site:facebook.com
```

4.3 Exclude several websites at once

```
wireless security cameras -site:ebay.com -site:facebook.com Brisbane historical
photographs -site:facebook.com -site:instagram.com
```

4.4 Exclude several unwanted words

```
Brisbane history -tourism -realestate -hotels -jobs Brisbane historic buildings -
tourism -realestate -site:instagram.com -site:facebook.com
```

4.5 Exclude Facebook from shopping searches

```
USB microphones -site:facebook.com computer graphics cards -site:facebook.com
wireless headphones -site:facebook.com -site:instagram.com
```

Our recommendation: Keep a standard exclusion list available to paste into searches whenever you need it.

5. SEARCHING SPECIFIC WEBSITES AND DOMAINS

The `site:` operator tells Google to search within a particular website or domain.

5.1 Search an entire website

Format: `site:website.com search terms`

```
site:slq.qld.gov.au Brisbane photographs site:archivessearch.qld.gov.au Brisbane
1890
```

```
site:heritage-register.ehp.qld.gov.au Brisbane buildings site:trove.nla.gov.au
Brisbane newspaper
```

5.2 Search Australian Government websites

Use: `site:gov.au`

```
Brisbane history site:gov.au Queensland railway history site:gov.au
```

5.3 Search educational institutions

Use: `site:edu.au`

```
Queensland industrial history site:edu.au site:uq.edu.au Brisbane history
```

5.4 Search a particular organisation

```
site:slq.qld.gov.au "Yeppoon" site:brisbane.qld.gov.au "Roma Street"
site:trove.nla.gov.au "Thomas Tristram"
```

5.5 Search a particular section of a website

```
site:example.com/archive Brisbane site:example.com/research "Queensland history"
```

5.6 Search for a website's indexed pages

```
site:slq.qld.gov.au
```

6. SEARCHING FOR DOCUMENTS AND FILE TYPES

Google can search for different document formats using `filetype:`.

6.1 Find PDF documents

```
Brisbane historical buildings filetype:pdf Queensland railway history filetype:pdf
```

PDFs are useful for finding: Heritage assessments, Historical reports, Council planning documents, Government publications, Research papers, Old books and digitised documents, Historical surveys.

6.2 Find Microsoft Word documents

```
Queensland heritage assessment filetype:docx Brisbane historical research filetype:doc
```

6.3 Find Excel spreadsheets

```
Queensland historical population data filetype:xlsx Brisbane heritage inventory filetype:xls
```

6.4 Find PowerPoint presentations

```
Queensland industrial history filetype:pptx
```

6.5 Find text documents

```
Queensland historical records filetype:txt
```

6.6 Search for multiple file formats

```
Brisbane heritage history (filetype:pdf OR filetype:docx)
```

6.7 Combine file types with website searches

```
Brisbane heritage buildings filetype:pdf site:gov.au Queensland railway photographs filetype:pdf site:slq.qld.gov.au historic building assessment filetype:pdf site:brisbane.qld.gov.au
```

7. SEARCHING BY PUBLICATION DATE

7.1 The after: operator

```
Brisbane tram history after:2020-01-01
```

7.2 The before: operator

```
Brisbane history before:2020-01-01
```

7.3 Search between two dates

```
Brisbane railway history after:2010-01-01 before:2020-01-01
```

7.4 Find recently published information

```
Brisbane heritage restoration after:2025-01-01
```

Important historical research warning: These operators filter publication/update dates, not when an event actually occurred. For event dates, try numerical ranges like `Brisbane fires 1900..1910`.

8. USING OR, AND AND ALTERNATIVE SEARCH TERMS

8.1 OR

```
Brisbane factory OR manufacturer history Yeppoon OR Rockhampton historic photographs
```

8.2 AND

Google generally considers words together automatically. An ordinary search for `Brisbane tram history` is sufficient.

8.3 Combining alternatives

```
Brisbane (factory OR manufacturer OR industrial works) history Queensland (aerated waters OR mineral waters OR cordial) 1900
```

8.4 Search for different names of the same subject

```
"Roma Street Power Station" OR "Countess Street Power Station"
```

9. WILDCARDS AND MISSING WORDS

9.1 The asterisk wildcard *

```
"the * history of Brisbane" "opened in * Brisbane"
```

9.2 Search for incomplete quotations

```
"the first railway in * Queensland"
```

9.3 Search for variations of a name

```
"Thomas Tristram" Brisbane "T Tristram" Brisbane
```

10. SEARCHING PAGE TITLES, TEXT AND URLS

10.1 intitle: & 10.2 allintitle:

```
intitle:Brisbane heritage buildings allintitle:Brisbane historic buildings
```

10.3 intext: & 10.4 allintext:

```
intext:"Thomas Tristram" Brisbane allintext:Brisbane tram electricity history
```

10.5 inurl: & 10.6 allinurl:

```
inurl:archive Brisbane history allinurl:Brisbane history archive
```

11. SEARCHING FOR PRICES AND NUMERICAL RANGES

11.1 The two-dot range operator ..

```
laptop $1000..$1500 historic photographs 1880..1900 Brisbane population 1900..1950
```

11.2 Search for a particular year

```
Brisbane electric trams 1897 Brisbane electric trams 1890..1900
```

12. FINDING HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS AND IMAGES

12.1-12.6 Search Techniques for Images

```
Brisbane Queen Street 1890 photograph Brisbane 1920s black and white photograph
Brisbane historic photograph colourised Brisbane historical maps 1880 Brisbane
aerial photograph 1940 site:slq.qld.gov.au Brisbane 1920 photograph Brisbane
historical photograph imagesize:1200x800
```

12.9 Check image copyright and licensing

Before publishing: Find original website, identify creator, check copyright status, check license terms, record source, retain image credit.

13. SEARCHING FOR VIDEOS AND OTHER MEDIA

```
Brisbane historical footage 1920s video Brisbane tram history site:youtube.com
Queensland industrial history documentary Queensland oral history recordings
```

14. GOOGLE ADVANCED SEARCH

Visit: `https://www.google.com/advanced_search`

Allows searching by exact phrases, exclusions, specific domains, file types, dates, languages, and usage rights without memorising commands.

15. GOOGLE SEARCH TOOLS AND FILTERS

- **Search Tools:** Filter by custom date ranges (Past hour, 24 hrs, week, year).
- **News Tab:** Search heritage building restorations, announcements, and local history.
- **Google Books:** (`https://books.google.com/`) Search historical directories, books, and public documents.
- **Google Scholar:** (`https://scholar.google.com/`) Academic research papers, theses, and scholarly references.

16. FINDING GOVERNMENT AND ARCHIVAL RECORDS

- **State Library of Queensland:** `site:slq.qld.gov.au Brisbane historic photographs`
- **Queensland State Archives:** `site:archivessearch.qld.gov.au Brisbane 1900`
- **Trove - National Library of Australia:** `site:trove.nla.gov.au "Brisbane" "electric lighting"`
- **Australian Dictionary of Biography:** `site:adb.anu.edu.au Queensland businessman`
- **National Archives of Australia:** `site:naa.gov.au Queensland historical records`
- **Brisbane City Council:** `site:brisbane.qld.gov.au Brisbane heritage buildings`
- **Queensland Heritage Register:** Official assessments, construction dates, and ownership history.

17. COMBINING MULTIPLE SEARCH OPERATORS

```
Brisbane historical photographs 1900 site:slq.qld.gov.au Queensland heritage buildings filetype:pdf site:gov.au "Thomas Tristram" Brisbane manufacturer -realestate -site:pinterest.com Brisbane tram history filetype:pdf after:2015-01-01 before:2025-01-01 computer monitor 27 inch -site:facebook.com -site:temu.com -site:dhgate.com
```

18. GOOGLE SEARCH SHORTCUTS AND USEFUL FUNCTIONS

- **Calculator:** `125 * 48` or `(2500 / 12) * 4`
- **Currency:** `100 AUD to USD`
- **Unit Conversion:** `10 kilometres in miles` or `3 feet 6 inches in millimetres`
- **Definitions:** `define:cordial`
- **Percentages:** `15% of 850`

19. RESEARCH TECHNIQUES FOR HISTORICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Combine multiple approaches when investigating buildings, people, businesses, photographs, and timelines. Always verify against original contemporary primary sources.

20. COMMON GOOGLE SEARCH MISTAKES

1. Using too many words.
2. Using quotation marks everywhere.
3. Putting a space after an operator (e.g., `site: slq.qld.gov.au`).
4. Assuming Google finds everything.
5. Assuming the first result is the most reliable.
6. Confusing publication dates with historical event dates.
7. Assuming Google Images means free to use.

21. READY-TO-USE GOOGLE SEARCH TEMPLATES

```
Brisbane Queensland history 1890 "Brisbane" "electric lighting"
site:trove.nla.gov.au Brisbane heritage buildings site:brisbane.qld.gov.au wireless
headphones -site:facebook.com Queensland historical reports filetype:pdf
site:gov.au
```

22. QUICK-REFERENCE SEARCH OPERATOR CHEAT SHEET

Operator	Purpose	Example
`""`	Exact phrase	`"Roma Street"`
`-`	Exclude a word	`Brisbane -tourism`
`-site:`	Exclude a website	`-site:facebook.com`
`site:`	Search a website	`site:slq.qld.gov.au`
`filetype:`	Find a file type	`filetype:pdf`
`OR`	Search alternatives	`factory OR manufacturer`
`after:`	Search after a date	`after:2020-01-01`
`before:`	Search before a date	`before:2025-01-01`
`*`	Wildcard in a phrase	`"the * history of Brisbane"`
`..`	Numerical range	`1880..1900`
`intitle:`	Search page titles	`intitle:heritage`
`intext:`	Search page text	`intext:Tristram`
`inurl:`	Search URLs	`inurl:archive`

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The secret to getting better Google results is not simply knowing more commands. It is knowing how to combine them.

One of the most useful searches to remember is:

```
"exact phrase" filetype:pdf site:gov.au -site:urltoexclude.com
```

Happy searching!

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