

Investigating Search Engines

What is a search engine?

A search engine is a web site that uses software to browse the Internet. A search engine will retrieve a listing of World Wide Web sites related to the key words you specify.

How do you choose a search engine?

There are dozens of search engines to choose from. It is a good idea to become very familiar with at least two search engines. Here are some factors you should consider when choosing a search engine:

- Size of database
- Number of relevant hits you receive
- Quality of hits you receive
- Sophistication of searches permitted
- Ease of use

One excellent source of information about search engines is Search Engine Watch at <http://www.searchenginewatch.com/>.

Exercise:

- Step 1:** Choose a search engine that you would like to learn more about from the list of search engines found at <http://www.wsu.edu/ReferenceTools.html>. You may choose a search engine that is not located on this list but if you do, you must first obtain permission from your instructor before proceeding any further.
- Step 2:** Fill in column one of the *Search Engine Comparison Table*. Reading the “help screen” of your search engine and trying some sample searches will help you to complete this task.
- Step 3:** Find three people in your class who have investigated a search engine different from the one you chose. Complete the *Search Engine Comparison Table* by writing down their findings. Discuss the similarities and differences between the search engines. When you complete the table you will have a comparison of four different search engines.
- Step 4:** Answer the questions that appear on the next page.

A. Choose a search engine from the *Search Engine Comparison Table*. Using the criteria gathered on the *Search Comparison Table*, perform a search on any topic of interest to you.

Name of search engine:

Information I searched for:

The search I performed looked like this:

Number of entries (results) received:

B. Choose a different search engine from the *Search Engine Comparison Table* and look for information on exactly the same topic.

Name of search engine:

The search I performed looked like this:

Number of entries (results) received:

C. Would you recommend these search engines to a friend? Which search engine do you prefer? Justify your answers in the space provided below.

Search Engine Comparison Table

Name of Search Engine				
URL				
Size of Database				
Multidisciplinary or Subject Specific				
Abstract is Included				
Boolean Operators are Allowed				
Plus (+) and Minus (-) Signs are Allowed				
Specific Field Searching is Allowed				
Truncation Symbol				
Quotation Marks are Allowed				
Results are Ranked				
Performs Concept Searching				
Other Important or Unique Features				