

A Guide to Effective Google Searching

For Beginners



Digital Skills
Sessions, by:



Newcastle Libraries

An introduction to getting more out of Google

For those of us who use the internet, Google is often our first point of call when searching for information. Therefore, it is important that we know how to make sure that we are getting the best search results we can and understand where Google's limitations lie.

By the end of this session, you will:-

- Be aware of new search features
- Be able to use the advanced search feature and be aware of advanced search commands
- Be aware of some of Google's specialists tools and databases

Google's inconsistent results and features

Google's search results can often be unpredictable and search features can seemingly disappear overnight, so do be aware that every time you search on Google your results may be affected by lots of different factors. These can include:

- Which browser or version of browser your computer has
- Which operating system or platform your computer uses
- Whether you are logged in to Google or not
- Whether your web history is switched on or not
- Which server Google happens to send your search too
- Whether the searcher location is specified or not
- Whether Google is testing any new developments
- Which language and which country version is used

Google changes every so often and sometimes you may find the layout has changed. Depending on your browser you also get different layouts. This guide will be using Internet Explorer. So again, be on your guard and look out for the changes that occur and adjust your search accordingly.

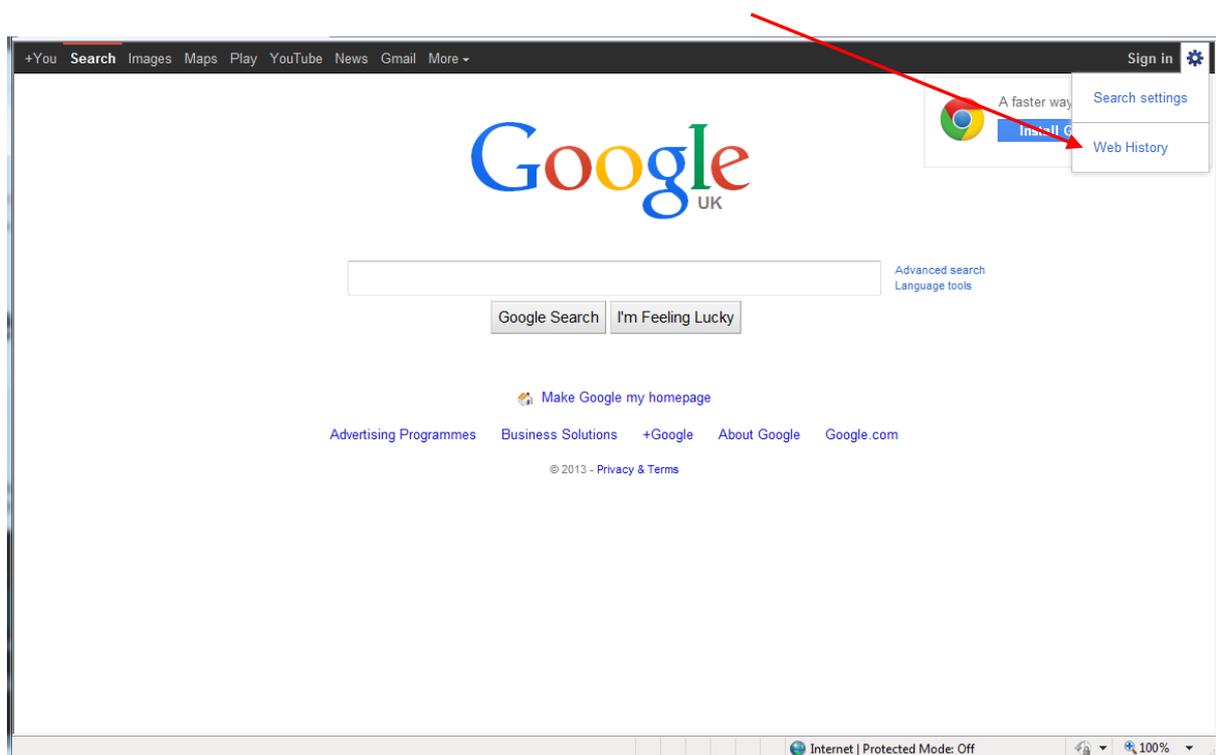
Developments over the past year

Google has been working on various developments over the last year. These include:

- Personalisation
- Social media becoming a part of the search
- Localisation
- Semantic search
- New search features

Personalisation

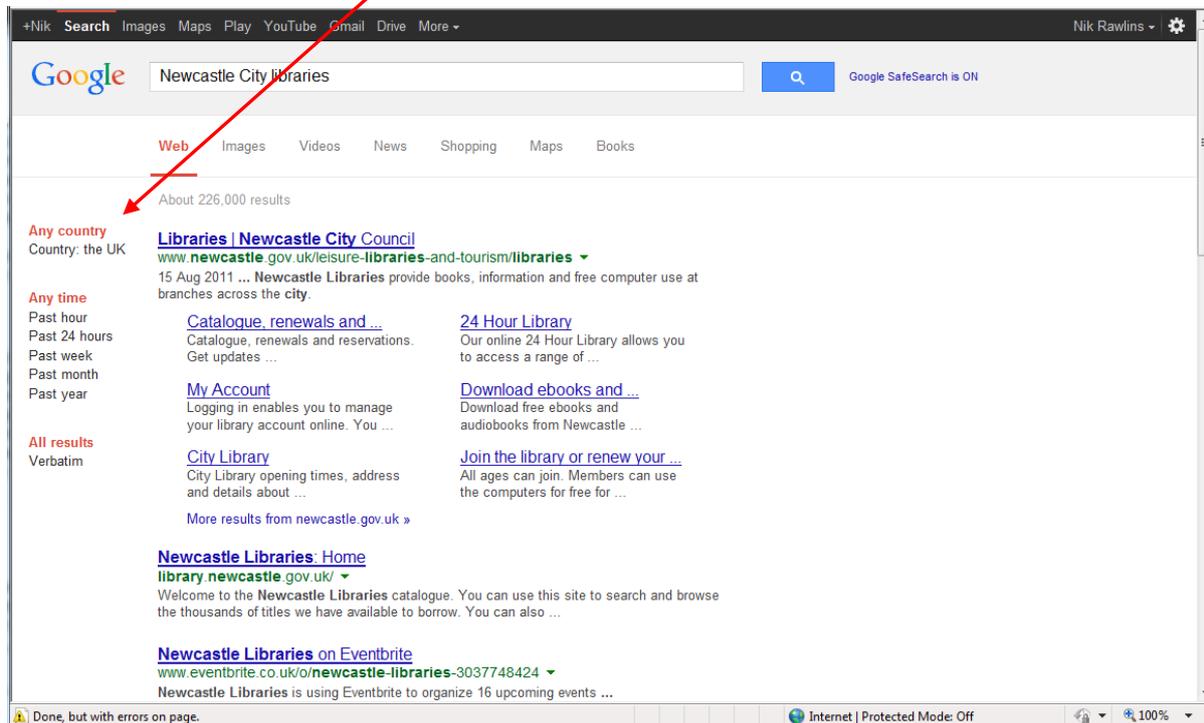
Google automatically tracks your searches and what you click on. Results are therefore “personalised” based on your searches and page views. To stop this happening, you can disable your web history by clicking on the web history link or cog wheel which normally appears on the top right hand side of your results page.



Localisation

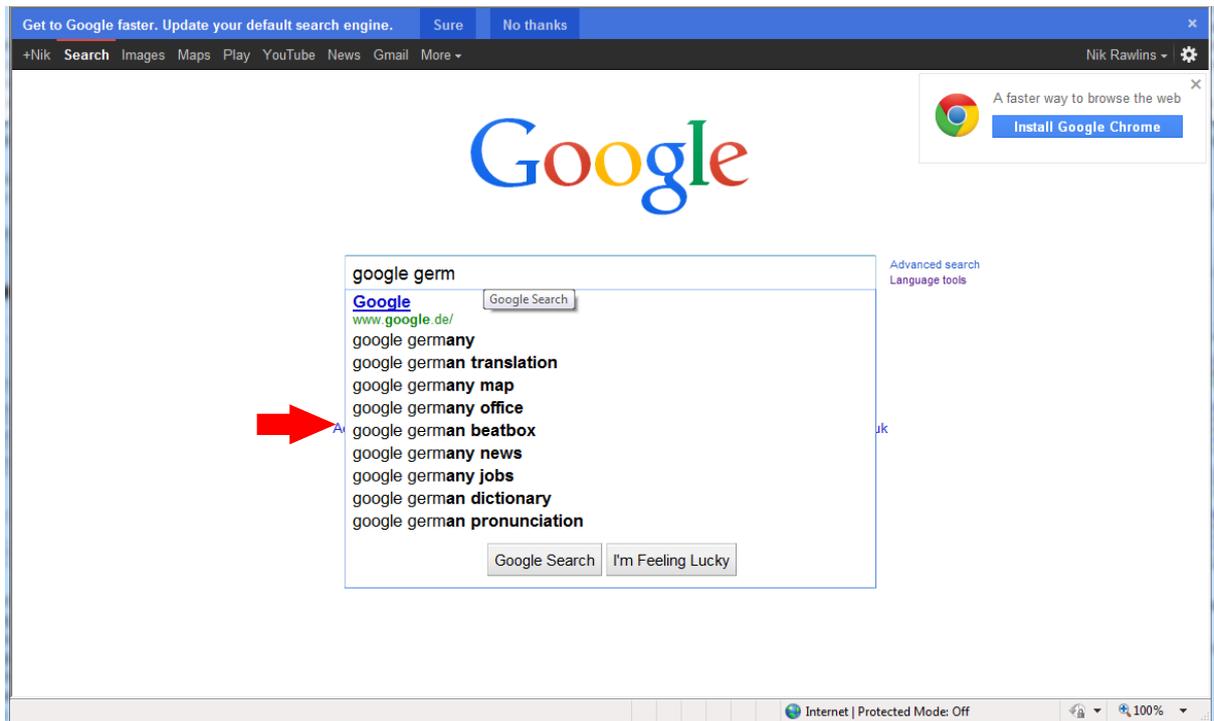
Google recognises where you are geographically based due to your IP address of your computer. This can be useful for when you do personal searches such as finding local restaurants or banks, but it can interfere when carrying out broader research e.g. finding out the number of restaurants in the UK. Sometimes your IP address gives out a wrong place and you might end up getting search results not for your area.

However, you can change your location manually on Google. To do this, click on 'change location' on the left hand side of the page.

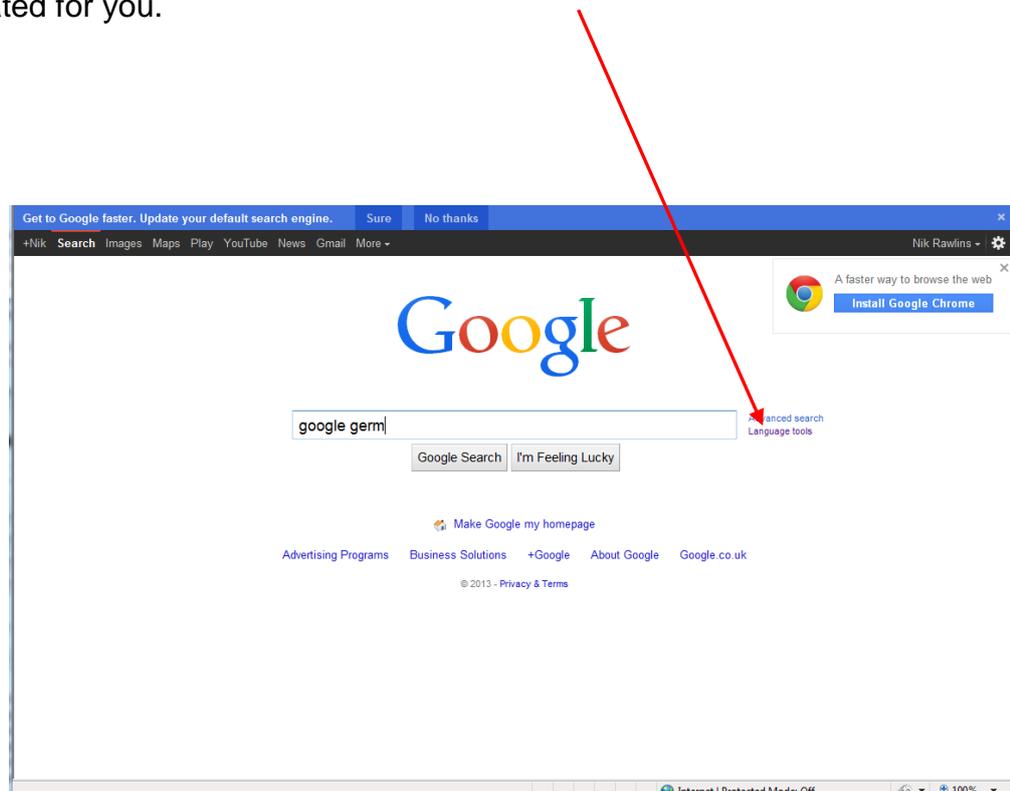


Depending on your type of search and the information you're looking for, it may be also worthwhile looking at a different country version of Google, as Google gives local content priority in results. For example, if you were looking for the Norwegian painter Edvard Munch, you get slightly different results by searching on UK Google and the Norwegian Google. This may also be the same if you were looking for details of company which is based abroad.

To find a different country version of Google, just search “google country name” and it will come up in the drop down menu.



Remember that unless you speak the language of the country version you are using, you may have to translate the pages yourself. You can use the Google translate tool, which you can access the ‘Language Tools’ link, to paste the URL and have the page translated for you.



Semantic Search

Google tries to work out the meaning of your search. This means that when you search, it may ask you ‘did you mean.....’ but it also tries to predict what you are searching for as you type and it changes the results accordingly. This is called “Autocomplete” or “Query Prediction” and availability depends on your country, browser and platform.

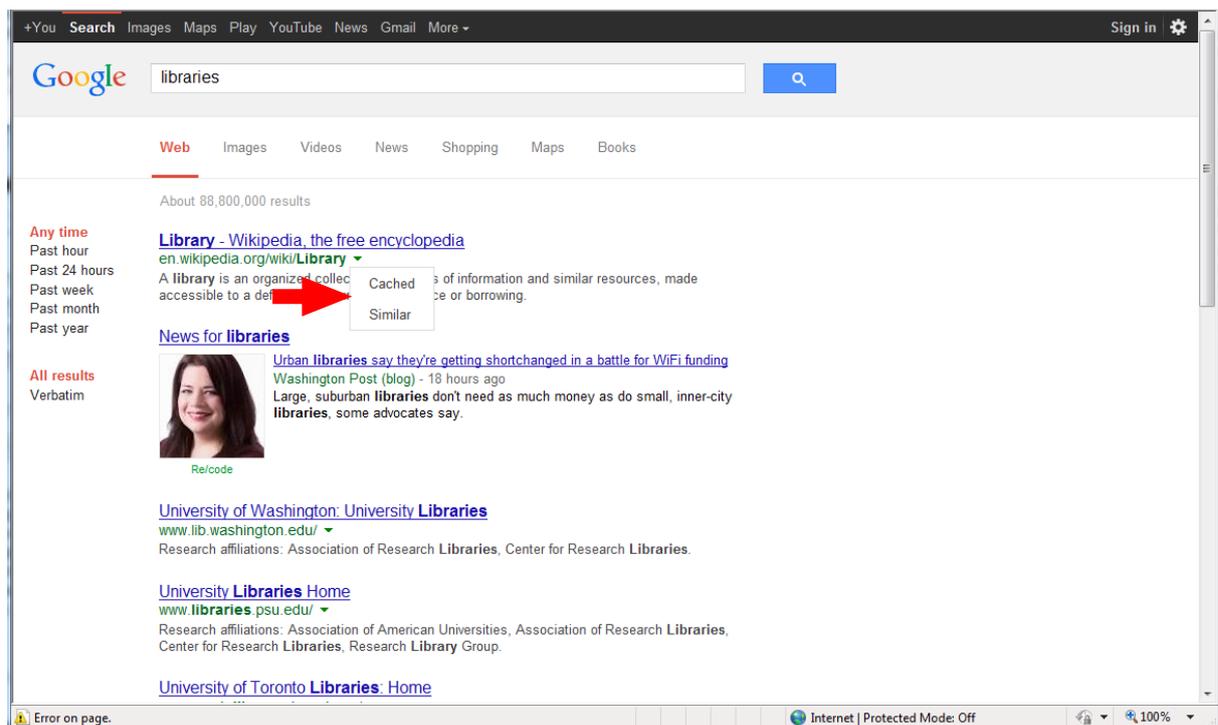
To disable click the cog in the right hand corner and go to ‘Search Settings’. Locate ‘Autocomplete’ and disable it.

Other Search Features

There are lots of useful search features to be aware of when searching Google.

You might have noticed the little green arrow next to the URL in green. This gives you access to the “**Cached**” and “**Similar**” option. “Cached” can give you access to websites that are temporally not working but also note the date at the top as the websites to make sure it is current! It also highlights the search term on the page. The “Similar” link will provide you with similar websites to the one that you are interested in.

Google sidebars feature on the left hand side of every Google search and they are there to help you refine your search. Note that your choices are limited in Internet Explorer.



Any time

Past hour

Past 24 hours

Past week

Past month

Past year

All results

Verbatim

Advanced Search

Another way to refine your search is to use the advanced search feature, which can be found beside the Google search box. There are instructions on how to use the different options the right side.

Advanced Search

Find pages with...		To do this in the search box
all these words:	<input type="text" value=""/>	Type the important words: tricolor rat terrier
this exact word or phrase:	<input type="text" value=""/>	Put exact words in quotes: "rat terrier"
any of these words:	<input type="text" value=""/>	Type OR between all the words you want: miniature OR standard
none of these words:	<input type="text" value=""/>	Put a minus sign just before words you don't want: -rodent, -"Jack Russell"
numbers ranging from:	<input type="text" value=""/> to <input type="text" value=""/>	Put 2 periods between the numbers and add a unit of measure: 10..35 lb, \$300..\$500, 2010..2011

Then narrow your results by...

language:	<input type="text" value="any language"/>	Find pages in the language you select.
region:	<input type="text" value="any region"/>	Find pages published in a particular region.
last update:	<input type="text" value="anytime"/>	Find pages updated within the time you specify.
site or domain:	<input type="text" value=""/>	Search one site (like wikipedia.org) or limit your results to a domain like .edu, .org or .gov
terms appearing:	<input type="text" value="anywhere in the page"/>	Search for terms in the whole page, page title, or web address, or links to the page you're looking for.
SafeSearch:	<input type="radio"/> off <input checked="" type="radio"/> moderate <input type="radio"/> strict	Tell SafeSearch how much explicit sexual content to filter.
file type:	<input type="text" value="any format"/>	Find pages in the format you prefer.
usage rights:	<input type="text" value="not filtered by license"/>	Find pages you are free to use yourself.

Advanced Search

Top Tips when searching on Google

- Look very, very, very carefully at your results and at what Google is trying to do to your search
 - automatic assumption of typos
 - automatic searching for variations and synonyms
- Use plus signs to try and force an exact match +
- Use the minus sign to exclude pages containing a term (but use with caution)
- Change the order of your terms e.g. “literacy information” instead of “information literacy”
- Repeat one or more of your terms e.g. “information information literacy”
- Use double quote marks around phrases or names
- Use advanced search commands (using advanced search feature or search commands found at the end of this guide)
- ...or give up and use something else. There are other search engines which you can use including www.bing.com and www.yahoo.co.uk

Other Google products / services

- **Google Books** <http://books.google.com/>: A tool where you can preview or read for free millions of books on a wide variety of topics.
- **Google Scholar**: <http://scholar.google.co.uk>: Google Scholar provides a simple way to broadly search for scholarly literature. From one place, you can search across many disciplines and sources: articles, theses, books, abstracts and court opinions, from academic publishers, professional societies, online repositories, universities and other web sites.
- **Google Art Project** <http://www.googleartproject.com/> : A unique collaboration with some of the world’s most acclaimed art museums to enable people to discover and view more than a thousand artworks online in extraordinary detail
- **Google Trends** <http://www.google.com/trends#>: Compare the world’s interest in your favourite topics. Enter up to five topics and see how often they’ve been searched on Google over time.
- **Google Finance**: <http://www.google.co.uk/finance> and <http://www.google.com/finance> Get real-time stock quotes & charts, financial news, currency conversions or track your portfolio
- **Google Public Data Explorer**: <http://www.google.com/publicdata/>: a tool that is designed to make large datasets easy to visualise and see. You can access

already loaded datasets including Eurostats, World Development indicators etc but you can also manage your own datasets with this tool.

- **Fusion Tables** <http://www.google.com/fusiontables>: a service for managing large collections of tabular data in the cloud. You can apply filters and aggregation to your data, visualize it on maps and other charts, merge data from multiple tables and export it to the web or csv files.
- **Google Custom Search Engines** <http://www.google.com/cse/>: With Google Custom Search, you can harness the power of Google to create a customized search experience for your own website.
- **Google blogs** <http://googleblog.blogspot.com>: Google has dozens of blogs. The main blog is the Official Google Blog:
- **Google Play** <https://play.google.com/store>: Download Movies, Books, Music, Apps for Android devices.
- **Youtube** <https://www.youtube.com/?gl=GB&tab=w1>: Youtube is part of Google since 2006. It is an online video platform where everyone can publish and share all sorts of videos.

Selected Google Search commands

“..”	Double quote marks around terms for a phrase match. For example “spending review” looks for spending immediately followed by review
+	Combines two search words
-	Minus sign before a term excludes pages that contain that term. It can also be used before some commands, for example –site:Wikipedia.org to exclude a particular site or domain from the search
*	Use the asterisk to stand in for one or more terms between two words, For example macular * degeneration, solar * panels. You can also use as a place holder, e.g. solar * will find results for solar flare, solar panel etc.
..	e.g. 2006..2008 will give you search results published between 2006 and 2008
allintext:	Searches for pages containing your search terms in the text of the page. For example allintext: uk petrol prices should return only pages containing ‘uk’ ‘petrol’ and ‘prices’ in the text of the page.
allintitle:	Restricts results to pages containing all of your search terms in the title of the page. (intitle: searches for pages that have the term immediately following intitle in the title.)
allinurl:	Restricts your search to pages containing all of your terms in the URL.(inurl: searches for pages that have the term immediately following inurl: in the URL of the page)
cache:	cache: followed by the URL of a page displays Google’s cached version of a web page instead of the current version of the page.
define:	Gives you quick definitions and also tells you the source of it, most of the times the definitions come from Wikipedia.
filetype:	Restricts your results to the specified file format. For example including filetype:pdf in your strategy finds only PDF documents..

Intext:	Restricts your search to pages containing the search term immediately following intext: in the text of the page. Other terms can be anywhere in the document.
Intitle:	Searches for pages that have the term immediately following intitle in the title of the page. Other terms can be anywhere in the document.
Inurl:	Searches for pages that have the term immediately following inurl: in the URL of the page Other terms can be anywhere in the document.
link:	Shows pages that point to the URL of a page. For example link:www.rba.co.uk/sources/mr.htm finds pages that have links to RBA's list of market research resources. Note: this command shows only a very small selection of pages that link to the URL.
OR	Use OR to specify alternative terms. For example oil OR petroleum. OR must be in capital letters.
site:	Restricts your search to the specified site or domain for example site:statistics.gov.uk, site:ac.uk, site:edu
in	e.g. 9 pound in euro, google with convert the unit for you and give you the result.