

# How to Search Smarter with Google

Google isn't just a neutral search tool anymore. It actively filters, summarizes, and personalizes results, often keeping users from original sources. This can be useful in some situations, but it can also hinder specific or dependable research. With the right techniques and a critical approach, you can turn your Google search into a much more precise and effective research tool.

## How has Google Changed in Recent Years?

- A large share of searches now end without clicks, especially due to AI-generated summaries.
- Results are personalized and influenced by algorithms, ads, location, and history.
- Two people can search the same thing and get different answers.
- Most users lack the critical research skills to navigate this system effectively.

## Searching Smarter with Google

- With the right search techniques, you can precisely filter results by site, date, file type, or exact wording.
- You can access better, less visible information (including original documents, archived pages, and real user discussions) instead of curated or branded content.
- There are no extra tools required. These capabilities are already built into Google and free to use. They're just not well-known.

## Take Control of Your Results

Google "interprets" your searches by default. It changes wording and personalizes results. But using search operators lets you override that and find exactly what you are looking for.

### Use These Techniques:

Search for exact phrases → Quotation marks (" ")

- ie. "the medium is the message"

Exclude unwanted results → Minus sign (-)

- ie. jaguar -car

Search within a specific website → site:

- ie. site:nytimes.com climate

Set limits (price, dates, etc.) → Number range (..)

- ie: laptop \$500..\$800

Turn off Google's rewriting of your words → Verbatim mode (Found under Tools)

## Find Real Sources

Not all results are equal. Many top links summarize or simplify information instead of linking to the original source. These techniques will help you find original and primary sources

### Use These Techniques:

Find PDFs, reports, and research papers → filetype:

- ie. filetype:pdf remote work productivity

Filter by time → before: / after:

- ie. AI policy after:2023

Require words in the page title → intitle:

- ie. intitle:"media literacy"

Search parts of URLs → inurl:

Directories with hidden files: "index of"

## Find Authentic Opinions

Many top search results are “Search Engine Optimized” content, meaning they were created to rank high on Google searches (and make money), not to help you. These techniques help you find real conversations.

### Use These Techniques:

Search real questions in quotes

- ie. "can anyone recommend" noise cancelling headphones

Use platform signals

- ie. @reddit espresso machine

Check the “omitted results” link at the bottom of search pages.

*If you like, you can repeat the search with the omitted results included.*

## Use Built-in Tools for Quick Answers

Google can answer some simple queries directly. Skip extra websites and get answers quickly:

Comparisons

- ie. ibuprofen vs acetaminophen

Translations

- ie. Translate “hello” from English to Portuguese

Instant timer

- ie. timer 25 minutes

Definitions and synonyms

- ie. epiphany definition