The internet is growing exponentially, and thousands of new web pages are being added each day. The upside is that you have an enormous amount of information only a few mouse clicks away. The downside is that you must refine your approach to online research in order to target the handful of websites that may be useful to you. The following search tops are designed to get you stared and save you time. Happy hunting!

Finding Sources

- **Go to www.library.unh.edu**
  The University of New Hampshire Library has access to dozens of online databases catering to nearly every subject you may be studying. The site also has several online research guides and tools to ensure you'll find what you need. The library's web site is a good first choice to help narrow your research.

- **Try several search engines**
  Google is the most popular search engine in the world, so that is a good place to start. There are, however, other search engines that might be of use to you:
  Altavista.com   askjeeves.com   ditto.com   excite.com   metacrawler.com
  dogpile.com   Alltheweb.com   yahoo.com

- **Use the advanced search function**
  Most search engines have a link for "advanced search." This can be extremely useful in narrowing your search, as the additional features enable you to search by exact phrase, date range, domain, language, date of web page update, and more.

- **Choose your search words carefully**
  Use words that are specific, or unique, to what you are looking for. Some words are very common and will lead to far too many hits. If you are looking up *tea,* for instance, try using *orange pekoe* instead.

- **Search for phrases**
  When you search for a phrase, enclose it in quotation marks—*"orange pekoe tea."* Otherwise, many search engines will also return results that just have one of the words, or all other words separated within the source.

- **Combine words to restrict your search**
  Use more than one search term or phrase to make your request more specific.

- **Use the right language**
  This may sound like common sense, but if you are looking for poetry in Spanish, use the search word *poesía,* not the English word *poetry.*

- **Evaluate your sources**
  The Internet IS NOT the ultimate research tool that many people assume it is. Most of the information lacks depth, and there are many inaccuracies online. You will also come across several personal web sites or sites with inherent bias that can skew the reliability of the information.

Evaluation Criteria for Internet Sources

- **Authority**
  Look for a header or footer showing affiliation. Look at the URL (web address. For example, http://www.fbi.gov)Look at the domain: .edu. .com, .ac.uk, .org, .net. Is there an author? Is the page signed? Is the author qualified? An expert? Who is the sponsor? Is the sponsor of the page reputable? How reputable? Is there a link to information about the author or the sponsor? If the page includes neither a signature nor indicates a sponsor, is there any other way to determine its origin?

- **Accuracy**
  Unlike traditional print resources, web resources often do not have dedicated editors or fact-checkers. Currently, no formal web standards exist to ensure accuracy. Is the information reliable and error-free? Is there an editor or someone who verifies/checks the information? Remember, anyone can publish on the web.

- **Objectivity**
  Oftentimes, the goals of the site sponsors or authors are not clearly defined. Does the information show a minimum of bias? Is the page designed to sway opinion? Is there any advertising on the page? (Academic, government, and non-profit sites will generally avoid advertisements.)

- **Currency**
  Publication or revision dates are not always provided. If a date is provided, it may have various meanings, such as when the material was first written, placed on the web, or last revised. Is the page dated? If so, when was the last update? How current are the links? Have some expired or moved?

- **Coverage**
  Web coverage often differs from print coverage. Sometimes web information is "just for fun," a hoax, or someone's personal expression that may not be of interest to most people. What topics are covered? What does this page offer that is not found elsewhere? What is its intrinsic value? How in-depth is the material?

More Tips

- **For more information and examples of the criteria, visit the following web sites:**
  http://libraryguides.unh.edu/
  http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/evalcrit.html
  http://www.cocc.edu/library/web/

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