

# Googling for Grandpa

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*The web is a wonderful storehouse of info, but finding what you need can be a challenge. Here are some methods for improving the outcome of your searches.*

## *Common Problems using Search Engines for Genealogy*

- Many names are very common

One problem with using any search engine for genealogy is that many last names are common. For example, take the last name of "Cook." Using *Cook genealogy* will often result in many, many results. The first ones on the list might be helpful information, but you run the risk of missing some results because there are so many.

- Some words that have *similar* meanings

Another aspect of using *Cook genealogy* is that it would miss selecting sites that use a different word that means the same thing. *Family history*, *family tree*, and *ancestry* are just a few words that have a meaning similar to *genealogy*. Finally, you need consider common misspellings, such as *genealogy*.

- Words that can have *different* meanings

"Cook" is used as a surname as well as an occupation (such as "Lunchroom Cook") or in hobbies (such as "she loves to cook").

## Tips for Effective Web Searching

- *Focus on nouns*

Your search topic may include verbs, modifiers, and prepositions. Almost without exception, these words are disregarded by search engines or considered too variable to be useful. The main keywords are NOUNS.

- *Provide enough keywords*

One of the biggest mistakes you can make in searching the Web is not using enough keywords. How many is enough? It depends on your topic, but keep the number to no more than six or eight.

- *Be specific*

If the keywords are too broad, then too many results are returned. If they are too narrow, then too few results are returned. Synonyms can provide the right level and ensure proper coverage. Use **OR** to string synonyms together.

- Examples –
- records OR documents
  - pedigree OR tree

- *Use quote marks with phrases*

Phrases are a powerful search technique. They require that all terms appear in the exact order shown. Enclose phrases in double quotations " ". When using proper nouns, bear in mind that most search engines recognize upper versus lower case letters.

- Examples -
- Names "John Baker"
  - Organizations "Users Group"
  - Natural Phrases "census form"

- *Use AND to glue your search terms together.*

**AND** focuses a search by retrieving only those records that contain at least one term or phrase from each concept. Some search engines require that **AND** be capitalized, while others do not. The capitalized form will work for all engines. Limit **AND** to three or fewer.

- Examples -
- marriage AND groom AND bride
  - "Robert Jones" AND "Mary Smith"

- *Try Truncation*

Truncation is a technique for retrieving variations in one search term. It works best when the root word is long, when plurals require more than an "s" and, when the root word is not common to other words. Use the \* asterisk to indicate truncation.

- Example -
- child\* retrieves child and children

- *Specify the order you want*

Put keywords in order of priority. Search engines rank documents by relevance, with first query terms to be evaluated with a higher ranking.

- Example -
- genealogy AND Ohio AND "vital records"

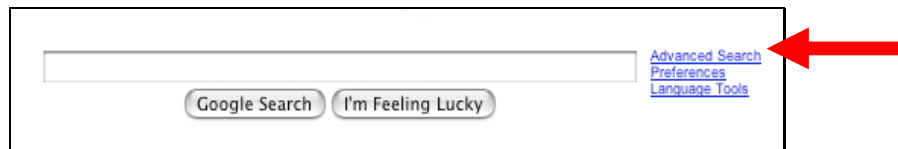
- *Know your limits.*

Most search engines provide options for limiting a search by date, url, language, title, and media. These techniques are easy ways to narrow a search which retrieves too many records.

- Examples -
- Title:"Ada County" finds pages with the phrase Ada County in the page title (which appears in the title bar of most browsers).

## Advanced Searching Made Easy

You can increase the accuracy of your searches by adding special characters that fine-tune your keywords. Most of the options listed on this page can be entered directly into the Google search box or selected from Google's [Advanced Search page](#).



Click the advanced search link (see arrow above) to get to the page below where fields allow you to use special search functions.

Use the form below and your advanced search will appear here

**Find web pages that have...**

all these words:

this exact wording or phrase:  [tip](#)

one or more of these words:  OR  OR  [tip](#)

**But don't show pages that have...**

any of these unwanted words:  [tip](#)

**Need more tools?**

Results per page:  ▼

Language:  ▼

File type:  ▼

Search within a site or domain:   
(e.g. youtube.com, .edu)

[+ Date, usage rights, numeric range, and more](#)

### " + " Searches

If a common word is essential to getting the results you want, you can include it by putting a "+" sign in front of it. (Be sure to include a space before the "+" sign.)

For example, to search for Richard Cooper I, use:

### " - " Searches

Sometimes what you're searching for has more than one meaning; "Bake" can be a last name or an action. You can exclude a word from your search by putting a minus sign ("-") immediately in front of the term you want to avoid. (Be sure to include a space before the minus sign.)

For example, to find web pages about the surname Bake that do not contain the word "oven", type:

## Restricting your search to a particular domain (web server address)

If you know the website you want to search but aren't sure where the information is located within that site, you can use Google to search only that domain. Do this by entering what you're looking for followed by the word "site" and a colon followed by the domain name.

For example, to find deed on Cyndi's List website, enter:

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## Try a site specifically designed to search Google using family tree information

[www.genealogy-search-help.com](http://www.genealogy-search-help.com)

### Free Genealogy Search Help for Google

Get the Best Genealogy Searches for Google by Using Your Family Tree

This free genealogy site will help you use Google™ for your research. It will create a series of different searches using tips or "tricks" that will likely improve your results. The different searches will give you many different ways of using Google to find ancestry information on the Internet.

Just complete the small family tree below for an ancestor and this site will set up the best searches for you, based on what you enter. **Tip:** If you don't know an ancestor's parents, but know one of the ancestor's children, use the child's name for the First Name and Last Name below (and spouse, birth, and death) and then enter the ancestor as the Father or Mother. This gives more information for building a search.

First Name	Last Name	Father	Last Name
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Spouse	Last Name	Mother	Last Name
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Place of Birth:

Place of Death:

## If at first you don't succeed, try another search engine.

Lots of search engines claim to index the entire web, but no one search engine covers everything. It's a good idea to search several for comprehensive coverage as your results will vary. Try a meta search engine ([DogPile.com](http://DogPile.com), [The BigHub.com](http://The BigHub.com)) which searches several individual search engines at once or a specialized search engine like [www.gensource.com](http://www.gensource.com).