**Research: Making Your Internet Searches More Effective**

When doing Internet research, it’s helpful to know how a search engine like Google works. When you put in your criteria, the search engine scours the Internet for anything that might resemble what you typed, but it isn’t “smart” enough to know what you really intended.

In order to make your searches more efficient, avoid typing complete sentences or asking questions. Instead, use keywords that you think might appear on webpages that relate to your topic. Additionally, by formatting your searches in certain ways, you can help the search engine to narrow down what you’re looking for.

Let’s say your topic was “informational essay writing.” There are multiple ways to search for this topic. See the examples below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *You type…* | *The search engine looks for…* |
| Informational essay writing | Sites with one of these 3 words |
| Informational:essay:writing | Sites with these 3 words in this order, but other words may appear in between |
| “Informational essay writing” | Sites with this exact phrase |
| “Informational essay writing”+research | Sites with this exact phrase AND the additional word somewhere on the site |

Remember, if you don’t get the results you want, try different combinations of key words. The first website that comes up isn’t always the best source.

**A note about Wikipedia**

Wikipedia is a great source for information, but because the content can be created by anyone, it isn’t always accurate. One good way to use Wikipedia is to help you narrow your topic. For example, instead of using “Spain” as a topic, you could go to Wikipedia, and look at how information is organized there. Then, use some of the sections to help you narrow your focus. You might decide to research Spanish culture, particularly art and music.

Directions:

Using Google, find the information from the table below on the Internet, and record your sources in the boxes provided.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Research Questions | Information | Source |
| What are the two species of fish on the endangered species list in South Dakota? | The paddlefish and the pallid sturgeon | <http://www3.northern.edu/>  natsource/endang1.htm |
| Who was the first non-Native American to reach the summit of Harney Peak? When did this take place? |  |  |
| What was the date of the “Battle of Hogwarts” in the *Harry Potter* book series? |  |  |
| At which high school did Mr. Swank coach swimming? |  |  |
| Who is tenth on the all-time assists list for the NBA? |  |  |
| How many cubs do grizzly bears have in a litter? |  |  |
| What was the best selling album of 1997? |  |  |