WRITE A WICKED QUERY
Finding Trusted Resources for Legal and Policy Research
(Or, Better Spells For Better Magic!)
QUERIES ARE MATHEMATICAL EQUATIONS

• I am a good witch
• All Good Witches Like MATH
Addition

• + Combines two or more terms

• DOG+COYOTE+VEST
- Excludes term from your search

Exclude a term
• Jaguar speed – car

• Exclude websites
  • unfunded mandates -site:wikipedia.org
“OR” AND | SEARCH TERM

• Put "OR" between each search query (you can also use |)

• marathon OR race
• Word or phrase inside quotes

• “unfunded mandates“
• “States lead the way, and Congress may follow“
• Google Scholar
• Legislative privilege
• Put "site:" in front of a domain or a site -
  • bill drafting manual site:.us

Legislatures:

site:.us or site:.gov or site:ncleg.net or site:kslegislature.org

Trusted sources:

site:.gov or site:.edu or possibly site:.org
Parentheses and Quotes prioritize search terms when you need to combine an exact term with something else.

- "heart disease" dogs or (heart disease) dogs
- Search in a site like NCSL - dyslexia (how to identify and support students)
- Or search Google - dyslexia (identify and support students) - 23 million hits
- Or, drill down more - dyslexia (identify and support students) site:.edu
- dyslexia (identify and support students) site:.gov – 70 thousand hits
• This tells Google to keep terms within a certain number of words of each other

• hybrid AROUND(2) car

• You may need to specify site type - hybrid AROUND(2) car site:.gov
NO SYNONYMS PLEASE

• You want pages talking about Colorado, NOT something else

• Put the plus sign before the word (no space)
  • mail ballot +Colorado
  • Add the site - mail ballot +Colorado site:.us
• mph in speed of light
• Grams in ounces
• km in a mile
• hours in a year
WILDCARDS AND UNKNOWNS

• Put a * in your word or phrase where you want to leave a placeholder.

• “States Confront Opioid * Epidemic”

• hybrid and * vehicles
SEARCH FOR RELATED SITES

• Looking for sites that are similar to the one where you found good information?
• Put "related:" in front of a web address you already know.

• related:time.com
COMBINING BASIC OPERATORS

- unfunded mandates -site:wikipedia.org
- site:ncsl.org hybrid and * vehicles
- site:.gov hybrid and * vehicles
PUBLISH DATE

- Search on your term – then add **one of the formulas below** to the **end of the URL** at the top of the page
- Legislative privilege
- Suspicious package
- \&tbs=qdr:s - Results from past second
- \&tbs=qdr:n - Results from past minute
- \&tbs=qdr:h - Results from past hour
- \&tbs=qdr:d - Results from past day
- \&tbs=qdr:w - Results from past week
- \&tbs=qdr:m - Results from past month
- \&tbs=qdr:y - Results from past year
LOCATION SEARCHES

• You know something happened in a certain state, but you don’t know the exact term.

  • location:maine marijuana committee
  • location:maine marijuana committee site:.gov

• OR you want information about a particular location

  • loc:Denver sushi
• When you know that certain words are in the title or the text

• allintitle:RELACS Professional
• allintext: who knows for whom the bell tolls
STOP WORDS

• Any common word a search engine will ignore because it thinks you don’t need it.

• Put it in “quotes” or (parentheses) if it is important.
TOO MANY RESULTS?
TARGET THE SEARCH -

• Add a word or phrase
• Be more specific
• Add a number range – Put .. Between two numbers
• Specify word order
• &tbm=blg searches for your terms in blogs only
• Limit to a type of site [.edu .gov .us] or limit by domain ncsl.org
• Try searching on a trusted site instead of Google - Public Library of Law – Congress – Government Publishing Office
• www.ncsl.org or www.plol.org or www.congress.gov or www.gpo.gov/fdsys
NCSL RESEARCH AND THE BILL INFORMATION SERVICE
CREATE AN NCSL ACCOUNT
NCSL STATENET SEARCHES

- Statenet uses Boolean or natural language ($ wildcard character)
- Version compare
- Bill Resources
- Text Hits
http://www.ncsl.org/
Searches for fun

Search on these terms

- Askew
- Recursion
- the answer to life the universe and everything
- do a barrel roll
- define anagram

- Once in a blue moon

At Google’s Expense -
- Where’s Chuck Norris?
- Google gravity

Chris Sherman, Founding editor of Search Engine Land
THANK YOU!

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