

Saharan Africa. Google returns only those web pages containing the listed search terms, and (most importantly) it lists first those web pages that contain the search terms in the closest proximity to one another.

Google does have some quirks, however. Google searches are limited to 10 words—if you enter more than 10 words, Google ignores all but the first 10 words it finds. Also, Google indexes only the first 101 kilobytes of any web page (typically about 10-15 pages, depending on the graphic content of the page). If the quotation happens to be toward the end of a long document, Google will not find it.

The “hidden Internet” includes, by most accounts, more than twice as much material as the searchable Internet. Searches on Google (or other search engines) fail to find these documents because they exist in file formats that are invisible to indexing software. Only recently have search engines developed the capability to reach inside of portable document files (PDFs) to index their contents, but many other formats remain inaccessible. The contents of the huge ERIC database provides a prominent example of web-based materials that are not indexed in most search engines. The only means for gaining access to these materials is through the use of the search system contained on the home page where the materials are housed.

The URL for a website can be used to go directly to the desired page on the Internet. To use this function, however, you must know the whole URL and enter it precisely—periods, commas, underlines, and slashes—in the address line. Sometimes, however, a debater knows one portion of a long URL but not the whole address. Fortunately, Google provides the means to find any web page that contain that certain portion of a URL. The Google search process involves entering the term “inurl” followed by a colon and then the known portion of the URL.

Google also provides the capability to limit a search to terms found in the title of a web page. This is done by listing “allintitle” followed by a colon and the search term. An example of such a search would be <allintitle: “public health assistance”>.

Selecting Google’s Advanced Search page offers numerous other ways to fine-tune an Internet search. A debater might, for example, want to limit an Internet search to federal government websites; this can be done by telling Google’s advanced search (in the Domain edit box) to select only documents ending in <.gov>.

Another function on the Advanced Search page allows you to select only certain types of files. This might be used, for example, to limit the search to PDF files. The main advantage of PDF files is that the user is shown a document with pagination exactly the same as the printed version of the document (especially useful for viewing congressional committee hearings).