

Moms Internet Guide

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Speedy Searching Simplified

Hi, I'm Sarah. Welcome to Moms Internet Guide—the place to find straightforward answers to all your questions about the Web.

Whether you're looking for a recipe for dinner or trying to help your kids with homework, the Internet is a great place to find the information you need to make it through the day. Unfortunately, the stuff I'm looking for doesn't always pop up on the screen as quickly as I would like, but I've discovered a handful of simple tricks to speed things up.

I like to start by typing a few keywords into the box at a popular search engine website.

My favorite is www.google.com, but I also use www.yahoo.com and www.ask.com.

Let's say I'm looking for a recipe. I'll start by typing lasagna into the box and... oops! That's my first tip. When you're in a hurry, it's easy to hit the wrong key. Take a few extra seconds to make sure you've spelled everything correctly. Then hit the search button and see what happens.

Sometimes a search engine comes back with hundreds of results for me to sort through. But if what I want isn't on the first screen, it's probably not worth my time to look at the rest of the links. I start my search engine over again. It helps to be as specific as possible. You'll have better luck searching for "lasagna recipe" than just "lasagna." Even better—type "healthy lasagna recipe" into the search field. It's like asking my kids to help around the house. When I spell out exactly what I need them to do, it's much more likely to get done. Search engines work the same way. Be as specific as possible, and you'll spend a lot less time clicking around the Internet.

Here's another great shortcut. You can put quotation marks around a group of words, so the search engine only returns pages where those words appear together. Let's say you're helping your third grader learn more about long division, and he's struggling with remainders.

You might put quotation marks around the words "long division with remainders" to turn up only the pages that contain this exact phrase. They're more likely to address his specific homework questions. This approach also works well with people's names, as well as movie and book titles.

Once in awhile, I find myself completely stumped when I'm searching—no matter what words I try. That's when I start looking for the link for the advanced search page. You'll either see these words right next to the search box, or you'll need to

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click on “options” to find them.

Sometimes the advanced search page looks a bit like a catalog order form. It helps you narrow your search efforts by prompting you to exclude certain words from the results or choose to only look at pages written in English.

When the advanced search fails, I like to shop around. Every search engine works in its own way, so it’s possible to uncover different results by changing sites. Can’t find what you’re looking for at Google? Try the same keywords at Yahoo! or Ask.

It also pays to do a little digging around within the search results. If you click through to a page that looks promising—but doesn’t contain the exact thing you need—try looking around the site a bit. Sometimes the correct information is simply hiding in a different page. I hope these tips work as well for you as they have for me, so you can spend more time baking that lasagna—and less time looking for the recipe.

Sites to Try:

www.Google.com

www.Yahoo.com

www.Ask.com