

# BASIC SEARCH TIPS TUTORIAL HANDOUT

Lakeland Public Library  
Technology Services

---

## QUICK TIPS

NOTE: These tips will work with most search engines in their basic search option.

- Use the plus (+) and minus (-) signs in front of words to force their inclusion and/or exclusion in searches.  
**EXAMPLE: +anorexia -bulimia**  
(NO space between the sign and the keyword)
- Use double quotation marks (" ") around phrases to ensure they are searched exactly as is, with the words side by side in the same order.  
**EXAMPLE: "Bye bye Miss American Pie"**  
(Do NOT put quotation marks around a single word.)
- Put your most important keywords first in the string.  
**EXAMPLE: +hybrid electric gas vehicle**
- Type keywords and phrases in lower case to find both lower and upper case versions. Typing capital letters will usually return only an exact match.  
**EXAMPLE: *president* retrieves both *president* and *President***
- Use truncation and wildcards (e.g., \*) to look for variations in spelling and word form.  
**EXAMPLE: librar\* returns library, libraries, librarian, etc.**
- Combine phrases with keywords, using the double quotes and the plus (+) and/or minus (-) signs.  
**EXAMPLE: +"lung cancer" +bronchitis -smoking**  
(In this case, if you use a keyword with a +sign, you must put the +sign in front of the phrase as well. When searching for a phrase alone, the +sign is not necessary.)
- When searching a document for the location of your keyword(s), use the "find" command on that page.
- Know the default (basic) settings your search engine uses (OR or AND). This will have an effect on how you configure your search statement because, if you don't use any signs (+, - " "), the engine will default to its own settings.