Searching Techniques

- Refine your search again and again if necessary.

- Read the help and tips pages of the search tool. Know how to use the browser as each browser is set up differently.

- Start at the advanced search page or the related search page. Read the help files.

- Check your spelling.

- Make sure you use the correct extension. Sometimes the extension of the URL will be a clue to the integrity of the web site. An example of this occurs when trying to access the website about the new food pyramid. Using www.mypyramid.<u>org</u> will take you to a bogus, copycat website and using www.mypyramid.<u>net</u> isn't a web site at all. Using www.mypyramid.<u>com</u> will immediately link to the legitimate United State Department of Agriculture website at www.mypyramid.<u>gov</u>.

- Sometimes the time of the day can make a difference.

- Don't expect one search engine to have exactly what you need. If you've tried a search engine, try a subject directory next (or vise versa). If you've tried a search engine and a subject directory, try a "meta" search engine or a unified search interface.

- Use the list of keywords you already formulated.

- Formulate a search question.

- Avoid common words unless in a phrase. Be as specific as possible.

- Use at least 3 keywords. Type the most important words first. Use words that you want to see in the results.

- BOOKMARK any websites that apply to your topic.

- Learn to use wildcard searches (use an "*", example: educat* = educator, education, educational). This technique will give you more hits not less.

- Learn to use Boolean operators (to broaden a search use `or` or the plus sign; to narrow a search use `and` or the words `and not` or the plus sign; to eliminate possibilities use `not` or the minus sign).

- Learn to specify the URL extension method (the `site:gov` allows you to narrow the hits to only government sites)

- You *can* find some searchable closed web databases by using a search engine. Entering your broad topic and including the word "database" often works (*Example:* `smallpox vaccine and database`).

- Learn to put key phrases in quotation marks (such as "literary criticism").

- Learn to use `ADJ` between two keywords when searching to find webpages where the two keywords appear next to each other. (such as `drug ADJ addiction`).

- You should be suspicious of sites that have a "~" in the URL. They generally indicate a personal web site. If you backspace through the URL you may find that the website is set up on a commercial web hosting service and not, for instance, by a professor employed at a university.

Schrock, Kathy. "Extreme Searching." <u>Kathy Schrock's Slide Shows for Teaching and Learning</u>. 23 Nov 2005. Kathy Schrock's Home Page. 12 Jan. 2006 <http://kathyschrock.net/slideshows/extreme05.pdf>.

Valenza, Joyce. "Search Tools." <u>Springfield Township High School Virtual Library</u>. 9 June 2005. School District of Springfield Township. 07 Jan. 2006 http://mciu.org/~spjvweb/searchtip.html.