

50 GOOGLE HINTS, TIPS & TRICKS FOR ONLINE RESEARCHERS

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- 1. REMEMBER THE GOAL OF USING GOOGLE** – All these hints are provided with one objective in mind: to refine your search results so that your results page is dominated by “hits” you want, rather than cluttered with tens of thousands of irrelevant results. Google nirvana is when your total results are fewer than 200 and your ancestors are among the first 10 to 20 results.
- 2. SEARCH IN LOWER CASE** - Google doesn't care, but some search engines are case sensitive: The search terms “*ed james*” gives results for: *ed james*, *Ed James*, *Ed JAMES*, *ED JAMES* and also *eD jAmEs*.
- 3. DON'T SWEAT THE PUNCTUATION** – Google mostly ignores common punctuation (comma, semicolon, periods and hyphens). Your search for *biloxi, mississippi* (with the comma) and your search for *biloxi mississippi* (without the comma) produce the same results. One exception: Google includes punctuation when searching for an exact phrase using quote marks: “ ” (see #8).
- 4. VIEW “CACHED” IMAGES OF PAGES NO LONGER AVAILABLE** - Ever received a “404 - This Page Not Found” message? Hit the Back button to return to Google's search results list. Then click on the unavailable item's “Cached” link to view Google's archived snapshot of the long-gone page. Then copy & paste any useful content to a file on your PC (see #41).
- 5. QUICKLY SEARCH WHOLE WEB PAGES** - Stop manually reading through long web pages trying to find where your surnames are hiding. Use your web browser's “Find” function: Ctrl+F (or for Mac users: Cloverleaf+F) to efficiently search an entire web page by jumping from occurrence to occurrence of the term you want. PDF files (Adobe Acrobat documents) also have a *find feature* using the binocular icon.
- 6. QUICKLY SEARCH WHOLE WEB SITES** - If a promising web site lacks a search box on its home page, you don't have to manually search each page for ancestors. Google can look at all the pages of a web site in a single search. Example: *site:GazetteExtra.com “elijah james”*. It only works for the *Visible Web* (see #25)
- 7. SEARCH FOR GENEALOGY SURNAME WEB SITES** - Google can provide a list of genealogy web sites whose *Titles* include your surname by using the *All-in-Title* phrase: Example: *allintitle:genealogy “Isaac Winston”* finds sites with the word *genealogy* in the title (across the web site's top blue band) and in which the name *Isaac Winston* appears on any page.
- 8. SEARCH PHRASES NOT JUST WORDS** - Search for a *phrase* using Quotes (“ ”). Example: searching for *ebenezer jones* (no quotes) results in 732,000 results (like a site with *Ebenezer Smith* near *Walter Jones*, but searching “*ebenezer jones*” (with quotes) eliminates 98.5% of irrelevant results making the *Good Stuff* much easier to locate.
- 9. SEARCH SYNONYMS** - Google automatically finds synonyms and derivatives of your search terms. Examples: search for *genealogy* and Google finds and emboldens similar words, like: *pedigree, family, ancestor, relation, descendant, lineage, forbearers*. Search for *marriage* to find *married, marry, marriages, marrying, matrimony, wed & wedding*.
- 10. USE WILDCARD SEARCHES** - Search unknown terms using Google's *Wildcard Word* (*). Search “*john * adams*” to see John Q. Adams, John Quincy Adams, John Jay Adams in your search results. Use more than one asterisk to represent multiple missing words. *Four score ** years ago*. Google doesn't support missing characters like, *sm*th*.
- 11. SEARCH FOR MISSING TEXT STRINGS** – Searching for *janesville-wi* produces results with any number of missing words, including, *Janesville, WI*, and *Janesville, Rock, WI*, and *Janesville, Rock Co., WI*, and *Janesville, Rock County, WI*.

12. **TARGET TIMEFRAMES** - Set a date range for your searches to exclude recent events. Example: **1750..1899** produces a list of web sites that include years (numbers, actually) between 1750 and 1899, inclusive, but omits sites mentioning only the 1900's.
13. **SEARCH FOR NAMES - BOTH FORWARD AND BACKWARD** - Search names as phrases: forward and backward to also find reverse name listings. Example: search "**mary sims**" and also search "**sims, mary**" to find additional relevant results.
14. **FORCE GOOGLE TO INCLUDE "IGNORED" WORDS WITHIN RESULTS** – For speed, Google automatically ignores many common words like **a, the, he, she, how, when, where, if**. Ordinarily this is okay, but **I** and **will** can be meaningful to genealogists. The solution: enclose **I** in quotes: "**arthur darrah I**" or precede **will** with a Plus Sign (+): for example, **dunning +will**.
15. **SEARCH FOR ALL LIKELY ALIASES** - Don't stop with a search for "**hiram h. goode**". He may have been indexed as **Hiram Goode, H. Goode, H. H. Goode, Hiram Howard Goode** or even **Howard H. Goode**. For common surnames, add geographic or time restrictions. For example search using this single long search string of all the variations at once: "**ira smith**" **OR** "**ira a. smith**" **OR** "**i. a. smith**" **OR** "**i. aaron smith**" **OR** "**aaron smith**" **chicago 1874..1938**.
16. **USE MINUS SIGN " - " TO EXCLUDE A UNWANTED RESULTS (same as "NOT")** - Exclude irrelevant stuff that crowd-out desired results by using the minus sign (-): Example: adding **-ulysses** to a search for **grant** removes 99.6% of the original 366 million hits. Be careful: **-texas** will exclude all sites with the word Texas, including sites that elsewhere may contain your ancestors.
17. **USE "AND" TO GET FEWER RESULTS** – To reduce the number of search results, use the restrictive term: **AND** (always capitalized). Note: Google assumes a *space* = **AND**. Example: **jones AND plano AND texas** (the same as **jones plano texas**).
18. **USE "OR" TO GET MORE RESULTS** - Expand search results that are too few by using the limiter term: **OR** (always capitalized). Example: **wilson maine OR utah** will produce results of Wilson names found in Either Maine Or Utah.
19. **TRY THE MARRIAGE COMBO PLATE** - Search husband & wife surnames to increase relevant results, for example: search "**william clinton**" **AND** **rodham**. Understand that "**william clinton**" alone gives 241,000 hits; but by adding **rodham** you eliminate 99.7% of the initial results; the remaining 0.3% of results emphasize the Clinton marriage and family (see # 17).
20. **FIND NAMES THAT APPEAR NEAR ONE ANOTHER** – Google uses the **AROUND** function to find a list of sites that contain two nearby words. Example: search: **comstock AROUND(4) knoll** to find web sites that contain the surname **Comstock** within 4 words of the surname **Knoll**.
21. **USE GENEALOGICAL KEY WORDS IN YOUR SEARCHES** - Add genealogical terms to your surname search string and search repeatedly with different emphasis. Suggestions: **born, birth, died, death, married, marriage, buried, burial, cemetery, list, index, roster, genealogy, family, history, surname, will, probate**, or try "**John Doe was born**" (see # 9).
22. **THE ORDER OF SEARCH TERMS IS IMPORTANT** - Search Engines apply priority to early words in your search string. Example: **smith tombstone rock wisconsin** produces somewhat different results than **rock tombstone wisconsin smith**.
23. **USE YOUR SEARCH ENGINE'S ADVANCED SEARCH FEATURE** - Combine these search techniques into long, complex, but highly relevant search strings either manually, or click on the Advanced Search link at https://www.google.com/advanced_search for preformatted web forms.
24. **SEARCH USING A LITTLE A.I. (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)** - Get a menu of smart, pre-formatted searches to choose from by filling-in Google's Family Search form at www.rcgswi.org/search-rcgs-site.html .
25. **DON'T BURY YOUR SEARCH RESULTS IN NEAR MISSES** – Unless told otherwise, Google includes results that that match only some of your search terms. To find only results with all the terms, use the **all-in-text** function. For

example, search: ***allinext:Edgerton genealogy "David Bradford"*** produces a single targeted result. Note: there are no spaces before or after the colon.

26. **REPEAT YOUR SEARCHES USING VARIATIONS OF YOUR SEARCH TERMS** – This is crucial: Searching the web is hard work; missing ancestors are often inaccessible - buried on page 200 of your search results. So, continuously revise and refine your search terms and re-search (repeat) with the aim of fewer than 200 hits with highly relevant sites in the top 10 to 20 results.
27. **REPEAT YOUR SEARCHES USING DIFFERENT SEARCH ENGINES** - No search engine has a complete index of the Internet. It pays to use more than one Search Engine. Consider trying www.Google.com, www.Mocavo.com, www.Bing.com, www.Ask.com or www.Yahoo.com.
28. **TRY SEARCHING WITH A META-SEARCH ENGINE** – They're like Search Engines on steroids; they automate the simultaneous search of multiple search engines. The up-side is broad results, but the down-side is limited complexity, because different search engine use different syntax rules. Still, try using: www.Yippy.com, www.WebCrawler.com and www.DogPile.com. For the ambitious, try the free trial version of www.Copernic.com
29. **FIND RELATED SITES** – Often, a productive site will have other valuable sites with similar content. Use Google to find a list of sites related to a good site. ***related:ames-family.com*** Note; there's no space before or after the colon.
30. **LOOK UP ANCESTORS IN A WEB PORTAL** – Portal sites maintain directories of web sites organized by category (e.g., county, state, surname or other). Search Portals (collections of resources) for free at www.Linkpendium.com. Explore over 10 million sites from either the Location Resource list or the Surname Resource list.
31. **TARGET ANCESTORS HIDING IN .GED FILES** - Most genealogy PC & Mac programs export files as GEDCOMs (.ged file format), so ask Google look for ancestors inside highly relevant .ged files. Example: ***filetype:ged "zelda lasher"***
32. **LET GOOGLE FIND (AND TRANSLATE) FOREIGN LANGUAGE WEB SITES** – In the Google search page click the [search preferences](#) link to include non-English language sites among your results and click, save preferences. Then go to the [Google Translation Tool](#) web site to download a button for your browser that translates 34 languages to English at the touch of a button.
33. **SEARCH GOOGLE BOOKS TO FIND TEXT FROM OUT-OF-PRINT BOOKS** - Google is digitalizing millions of books – many of which are no longer copyright protected and can be searched & read online for free at <http://books.google.com>. Use a *surname* & *qualifier* in the search box: Ex: ***lamphier "king county, washington"*** or ***"abiah cobb" genealogy***. Be patient; this is a multi-step search (find a book, then search the book).
34. **LET GOOGLE KNOW YOUR MOST IMPORTANT SEARCH TERMS** – Ever-helpful Google often produces results that match some but not all you search terms. Using a plus sign immediately before your most crucial term or phrase requires its inclusion in results. Example: ***+"adolph sendelbach" chicago OR "cook county" illinois*** makes sure Adolph is in each search result, even if he's in Toledo rather than Chicago.
35. **DON'T LET AN IMPRECISE LOCATION SPOIL A GOOD SEARCH** – When using a geographic search term, use all forms of the location, because the person who posted your information may have used abbreviations. Example: ***"clint eastwood" hollywood, OR "los angeles county" OR "los angeles" AND California***. Remember: if you don't search them all, you don't get all the possible results.
36. **USE BLOG SEARCH TO MEET OTHER RESEARCHERS** – Google's BlogSearch was discontinued in 2104, but you can still search of BLOGS (web logs) which are like public postings. Online blogs can be viewed for free at www.blogsearchengine.org. Use a *surname*, *location limiter* and *genealogy synonyms* in the search box: Example: ***bradley fayetteville genealogy***
37. **USE GOOGLE IMAGE SEARCH TO FIND PHOTOS, POSTCARDS & MAPS** - A Google search of Images indexed from web sites can find gold. Online images can be searched at <http://images.google.com>. Use a *surname*, *location*, *timeframe* or other *qualifier* like *postcard* in the search box: Example: ***"onondaga county, new york" lithograph***

38. **SEARCH GOOGLE IMAGES FOR PORTRAITS** – to show only faces, first do a standard Google image search from the site www.image.google.com. For example: first search “**bodie, california**” in Google Images, to produce images of the old Ghost town. Next, near the top of the results page click the **More** button to display a sub-menu of options to further shape your search results. In the **Type** sub-menu and select **Faces** from the drop-down menu. Your results are now limited exclusively to portraits (images of faces).
39. **TRY GOOGLE SCHOLAR SEARCH** - Search historical society papers, journal articles and college thesis for ancestors. Scholarly searches are free at <http://scholar.google.com>. Use a *name* and *location* in the search box: Example: “*alice waite*” *golden colorado*
40. **TRY GOOGLE NEWS ARCHIVES SEARCH** - Search historical newspapers for ancestors’ announcements, ships, companies, crimes, and events. Limited searches of OCR (computer aided transcriptions) are free at <http://news.google.com/archivesearch>. Images cost \$. Try a *name*, *location* and *date restriction* in the search box: Example: *boyd, mobile, alabama 1860..1890*
41. **CLIP AND SAVE VALUABLE WEB CONTENT** - Don’t just rely on bookmarking sites. The Web are being updated 20 million times per day; content changes; sites disappear. Use your web browser’s Copy (Ctrl+C) & Paste (Ctrl+V) tools to record important content to a Word file on your PC or your Google Drive (free cloud storage) for safekeeping.
42. **CITE YOUR WEB SOURCES** - If web content is not original, cite the original source (book author, title, publisher, publication location & date and page) and also the web page (transcriber’s name and email address, web address/URL and date posted). Note if the sources is primary (scanned image) or secondary (transcribed text).
43. **SAVE IT TO Google Drive** – Google’s free online (cloud) storage tool (www.Drive.Google.com) lets you file text, images, search results and save them to folders that you can share with others or look-up from any internet-enabled PC or Mobile Phone. Google Drive is useful when researching from a public PC or Library’s subscription service. Google Drive requires a free Google account which you already have if you have a Gmail address.
44. **USE GOOGLE TO DEFINE ANTIQUATED OCCUPATIONS, DISEASES OR TERMINOLOGY** – Google allows Define (*define*:) to identify the meanings of words and phrases. Example: search *define: ague* to discover that Uncle Cyrus had fever and shaking chills, or *define: lapidary* to learn he cut & polished stones into gems.
45. **TARGET INFORMATION IN A LOCATION** – Use Google’s *location*: function to find web sites (URLs) with in an area. Example, Google: *historical photo OR lithograph location:Janesville*. Note: no spaces near the colon.
46. **FIND SITES THAT LINK TO A GOOD SITE** – Often, a great site will have other valuable sites with similar content linked to it. Use Google to find a list of sites linked to a useful site. Example: *link:www.welshgenealogy.com* .
47. **USE GOOGLE MAP’S ADDRESS AND DRIVING DIRECTIONS** – Enter a complete address like *3760 n sycamore st miami fl* into www.Maps.Google.com to get a detailed map (including a high resolution satellite or street view option). Then, in the search terms field, add the phrase *to 3413 ruger ave janessville wi* to get detailed driving directions. Great for locating cemeteries or clicking on local businesses for info (menu, phone # or web site)
48. **USE GOOGLE STREET VIEW TO GET SNAPSHOTS OF ANCESTRAL HOMES** – As you may know, Google’s camera-equipped cars are circling the US and Western Europe, taking continuous 360 degree photos of neighborhoods. Use www.Maps.Google.com to locate an address. Then click *Street View* to call-up the photo image of the home.
49. **LET GOOGLE ALERTS SEARCH WHILE YOU SLEEP** - Google Alerts (www.Google.com/alerts) is an automated, online tool that lets you to build complex Google Searches and run that search continuously to look for new additions to the Internet. You are periodically alerted by email of new web info about your favorite sports team or your great aunt. Alerts are a neat service.
50. **TRY GOOGLE VIDEO SEARCH TO FIND TUTORIALS, TRAVELOGUES AND FAMILY STORIES** – Use <http://Video.Google.com> to search for short videos of interest. Example: search *bodie california*.