Google for Genealogy Research

Google Search Operators

Google is a powerful internet search engine. Use these search operators to modify and maximize your results! Get started at *google.com*.

Default Search

Example: spartan gilreath ramsey
If you do not add any operators to a search, Google will return results that usually contain all the search terms, but not necessarily in the same order or with the same spelling.

Quotation Marks ("")

Example: "spartan gilreath ramsey"
A word or words in quotation marks are considered mandatory and search results must be in the same order with the same spelling. This is useful if your ancestor's name had a very unique spelling. Just don't forget to consider the possibility of spelling errors in documents.

Minus Sign (-)

Example: thomas newton kelley -alabama -"new jersey"
A minus sign in front of a word with no spaces excludes that word from a search. Combine with quotation marks to exclude a phrase. This is helpful if your ancestor's name is a noun (e.g. Lamb; try -sheep), a location (e.g. London; try -england), or the same as a famous person's (e.g. Benjamin Franklin Rickman; try -inventor).

Site:

Example: "henry flipper" site:archives.gov
To search a specific website, add site: before a website address with no spaces. Can be used with a domain (e.g. site:.gov).

OR

Use OR - which must be capitalized - to:
• Search for any of the terms; this is useful for similar and interchangeable words.
Example: wife OR spouse OR married
• Combine searches for different words.
Example: california OR missouri

Two periods (..)

Example: "joshua rickman" 1798..1802
Search a date range using two periods with no spaces between the years. This is useful for limiting a search to your ancestor's lifetime or when you don't know the exact date of an event.

Asterisk (*)

*Examples: "spartan * ramsey"*
An asterisk serves as a wildcard that can replace a word or words in a search term. May be combined with quotation marks.

Google Search Tips

Capitalization and spaces

Be mindful of capitalization and spaces. For example, OR must be capitalized and no spaces should be used with the minus sign, two periods, or site:. However, search terms are not case sensitive.

Spelling

If Google does not find many results matching your search terms, it may suggest or search for other spelling variations. This can be helpful in identifying alternative spellings!

Advanced Google Search

Advanced search

Google's Advanced search has several Google search operators built in and provides some additional search options. Access at *google.com/advanced_search*.

Set up search alerts

Visit *google.com/alerts* to be notified via email when new results for a specific Google search become available. Requires a free Google account.

Additional Google Search Resources

Discover and track information about your ancestors with these additional Google resources.

Google Books | *books.google.com*

Search this full-text index of millions of titles including books, magazines, and newspapers. Look for city directories, county histories, compiled family histories, almanacs, legal or governmental publications, and periodicals.

Google Scholar | *scholar.google.com*

Search within scholarly literature. This may not be a traditional place for genealogy research, but it's worth looking at these articles, dissertations, theses, books, abstracts, and case law collections.

Google Images | *images.google.com*

Search for images such as photos, maps, documents, newspapers, etc. by keyword, or try a reverse image search using your images.

Google Maps and Google Earth
maps.google.com, earth.google.com

Google Maps and Google Earth allow users to search for and look at locations across the world from home through a combination of satellite imagery, aerial photography, street maps, and 360° interactive panoramic street views. Build your own maps to track an ancestor's life or family migrations, search for historic homes, or plan a research trip!

Combine Google Search Operators

Try combining Google search operators for even more powerful searching!

> "joshua rickman" site:.gov -actor

> "muriel" smith OR ramsey 1854..1860

> "henry * flipper" -archives.gov

> clayton kelley sister OR sibling -wife

Google Products

A free Google Account provides access to many products for documenting, sharing, and organizing your research.

Gmail - A free email service that integrates with other Google products.

Drive - A place to store and share docs, photos, videos, etc. Great for sharing and collaborating with family.

Docs - A word processing program. Take notes, write reports and letters, record transcriptions, etc.

Sheets - A spreadsheet creator. Build research logs, locations lists (which can be imported to Google Maps), family group sheets, etc.

Calendar - A calendar that integrates with other Google products. Add ancestor life events, notifications, etc.

Keep - Create notes and lists. Integrates with Calendar.

Tasks - Create to do lists. Integrates with Calendar.

Sites - Create free websites to share and collaborate on genealogy research.

Translate - Translate text to and from a variety of languages. Works best with smaller amounts of text.

YouTube - An online video and social media platform. A great place to find tutorials for Google products, learn more about genealogical research, or to create and share your own videos!

TOP TIPS

Access these products on a computer via an internet browser or by downloading the apps on a mobile device.