HOW TO FIND INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET
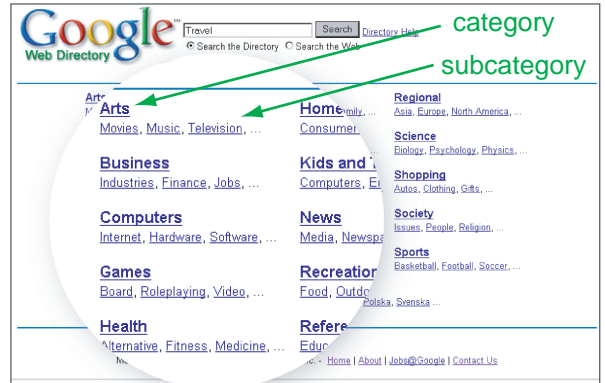
DIRECTORIES VS. SEARCH ENGINES

If you have a general idea of the subject in which you're interested, but are not sure exactly what you're looking for, a directory is a great place to start. Directories like Yahoo! use human editors to organize information in broad categories, such as finance, sports, or travel. Think of them as giant card catalogs. By starting with these categories and then moving down through subcategories, you can narrow your search until you find the information you need.

If you already know exactly what you're looking for, a search engine is the best way to find it. Search engines use keywords or phrases you choose to determine which web pages have relevant information. Think of a search engine as an index for the web.

CHOOSING KEYWORDS

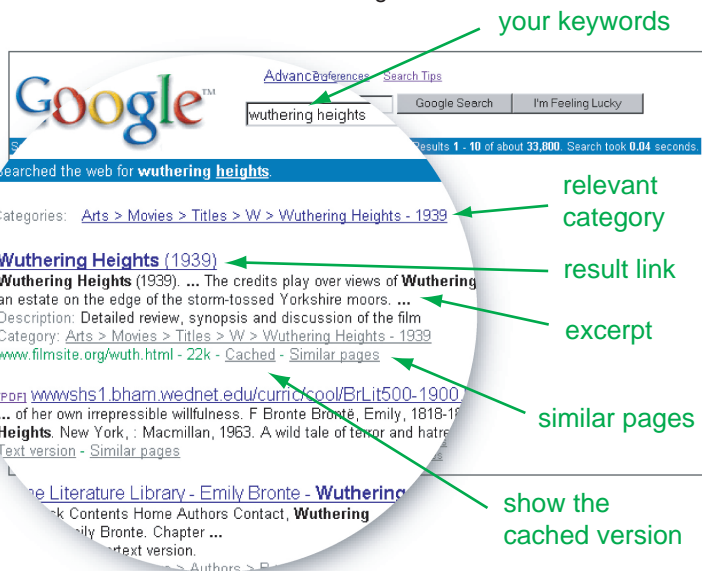For the best results from a search engine, it's important to choose your keywords wisely. Keep these tips in mind:

• Try the obvious first. If you're looking for information on Picasso, enter "Picasso" rather than "painters".

• Use words likely to appear on a site with the information you want. "Luxury hotel Dubuque" gets better results than "really nice places to spend the night in Dubuque".

• Make keywords as specific to your topic as possible. "Antique lead soldiers" gets more relevant results than "old metal toys".

• Use a directory to find keywords related to your topic, then enter those words in a search engine.

The most relevant results appear at the top of the screen. Click the results link to go directly to the site listed.

Find this guide online at http://www.google.com/searchguide.html

Directories arrange information by topic. Click through categories and subcategories until you find what you want.
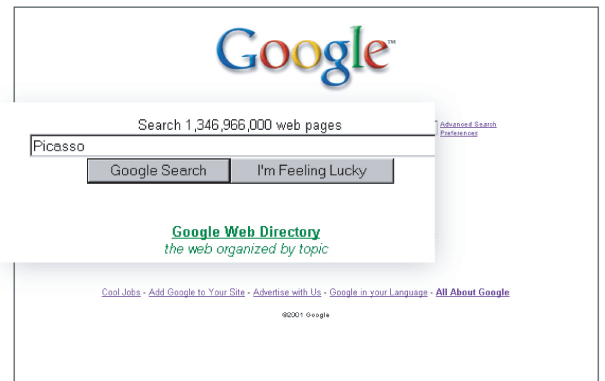
Google looks simple, but searches more than a billion pages. Enter what you're looking for, then click "Google Search".

READING THE RESULTS

Search engines put the most relevant results first, so if what you want is not in the top listings, try again with more specific keywords. Or, narrow your search by adding more keywords. Google returns only pages containing all the keywords you use, so adding more keywords eliminates less relevant pages. To get more results, use more general keywords or include fewer search terms.

Google's "cached" link shows you a snapshot of a web page so you can see it even if the actual site is not accessible. On cached pages, your keywords are highlighted to make them easier to find.

Seeing where your keywords appear on a web page prior to clicking a result link can save you time. That's why Google displays an excerpt from each returned result page showing your query terms in bold type. These snippets let you see the context in which your search terms appear on the page, so you can determine if the site is worth visiting.

To find more pages like a particular result, click on the "Similar Pages" link. This service automatically scouts the web for pages with content related to the link you select.

To begin your search, type www.google.com into your browser's "Address" field and hit enter.