

Advanced Searching with Wildcard * and Proximity on Google and Other Search Engines

Use advanced search commands with Google and other search engines to find better results. Google uses the same symbol—an **asterisk (*)**—both as the **wildcard** character and for **proximity** searches. The wildcard searches for variations in words (truncation), and can replace a whole word for proximity searches.

The asterisk (*) serves as a whole-word wildcard. You use it like this: word A * word B. This commands Google to find word A where it appears within one word of word B.

Some practical applications of the command include using it to find e-mail addresses or other information about people. For example, the query, *email * domain.com*, will retrieve the word, email (or the variation, e-mail), within one word of a domain name. If you want to cast a wider net, you might try *email ** domain.com*. This would catch a page with the following sentence: My email is myname@domain.com. By the same token, using 3 asterisks would catch: My email address is myname@domain.com.

Using the asterisk is also helpful in people searching, but only if the research subject has an uncommon name. For example, the query, *firstname * lastname*, will retrieve matches for a middle initial or full middle name.

Select Advanced Search Commands					
Limit To	Ask	Exalead	Google	Live	Yahoo
Title	<i>intitle:</i>	<i>intitle:</i>	<i>intitle:</i> <i>allintitle:</i>	<i>intitle:</i>	<i>intitle:</i>
URL	<i>inurl:</i>	<i>inurl:</i>	<i>inurl:</i> <i>allinurl:</i>	NA	<i>inurl:</i>
Link Text	NA	NA	<i>inanchor:</i> <i>allinanchor:</i>	NA	NA
Text	NA	NA	<i>intext:</i> <i>allintext:</i>	NA	NA
Cache	NA	NA	<i>cache:</i>	NA	NA
Definition			<i>define:</i>		
File Type	NA	<i> filetype:</i>	<i> filetype:</i>	<i> filetype:</i>	<i>originurlextension:</i>
Link To	NA	<i> link:</i>	<i> link:</i>	<i>+ link:</i> or <i>+ linkdomain:</i>	<i> link:</i>
Phone	<i>address of name or phone number of name or phone listings for name</i>	NA	<i>phonebook:</i> <i>rphonebook:</i>	NA	NA
Phonetic Spelling	NA	<i>soundslike:</i>	NA	NA	NA
Site	<i> site:</i>	<i> site:</i>	<i> site:</i>	<i> site:</i>	<i> site:</i> <i> hostname:</i>
Stemming	NA	<i>wordroot*</i>	<i>automatic for some English language words</i>	NA	NA
Stocks	<i>stock quote ticker or ticker stock quote</i>		<i>stocks:</i>	<i>stock or quote ticker (no colon) or ticker stock</i>	<i>quote ticker (no colon)</i>
Weather	<i>location weather or forecast (no colon) or forecast location</i>		<i>weather location (no colon)</i>	<i>weather or forecast location (no colon)</i>	<i>weather location (no colon)</i>

This chart accompanies the article, *Web Searching with Advanced Commands*, The Virtual Chase, 29 October 2007. Copyright 2007 Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll, LLP *all rights reserved*. http://www.virtualchase.com/articles/advanced_search_commands.html