



Becoming a Google Search Ninja



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Activity Objective: Learn More About Google Search - Learn a Few Search Symbols and Operators

Instructions: You probably already thought that Google Search was really useful but let's dig in a little deeper and see how you can do even more powerful, specific searches. Respond to the questions as you make your way through the activity.

1. Let's learn a little bit about an animal, the jaguar.

Run a google search for: **jaguar**

How would you describe the results on the first page? Are the results all about animals? Were you surprised by the very first result? Why?

2. Jaguar isn't the only word that can mean a few different things - there are lots of words or names that mean different things depending on their context. Ajax is the name of ancient Greek hero, a cleaning product, and also a tool for web development. An apple is both a fruit and one of the largest technology companies in the world. Brainstorm with a classmate and try to come up with a list of 5 words or names that are used to identify two or even three very different things depending on their context.



Ajax the Greek



Ajax the Cleaner

3. Usually when you are searching for words like this you're only curious about ONE of those aspects. In this case, we want to know learn about the animal jaguar, not the car or football team. Google lets you use **symbols** and signs to do nifty things that help us modify our search results. In this case, you can use the - symbol to remove certain search results. You can see why it makes sense to use the subtraction sign for this. So, search again for Jaguar, but this time “subtract” car from your search by searching for jaguar -car . Observe how the results are different. Subtract even more. Run a search for: **jaguar -car -football** Notice that you have to put the word you are removing right after the - sign. Are these results more relevant for your search?



4. Pick one of the words or names you came up with for question #2 and experiment with refining your search results using the - symbol. Did it work?
5. Do you think knowing the - symbol is useful?
6. Before we move on to search **operators**, let's check out one more **symbol** that could help you with some searches. Maybe all this searching about jaguars will make you fall in love with them, and you want to buy a jaguar stuffed animal so that you can always have a jaguar around. Let's say you have a £10 to £20 budget. You can use the £ symbol to give a range in your search.
Run a search for: **jaguar stuffed animal £10...£20**
Describe the results.



7. What is another way people might want to use the £ \$ € symbols besides making purchases? Do you think knowing these symbols can be useful?

8. Let's get back to learning about jaguars. Maybe you'd like to know what news articles have been written about jaguars. Even more specifically, maybe you want to know what articles have been written about jaguars in specific newspapers, let's say the New York Times and the Guardian. Use the - symbol that you know, and also something new.

Run a search for: **jaguars -car -road site:guardian.co.uk** and then **jaguars -car -road site:nytimes.com**

Describe the results.

Are there any differences between the searches in a British newspaper and in a US newspaper? Hint: think about using **-football** Why?

9. As you saw with the search from question #8, there's a way that Google lets you search within a website or type of webpage that you choose. To do this, you used the site **operator**. **Operators** are just like symbols, but they use words instead of symbols. The site operator can be quite handy. Maybe you only want to search for websites that end in .edu, or .ac.uk because you often trust sources from educational institutions. You can put site:.edu or site:.ac.uk after your search term. Run a search for: **jaguar animal site:.edu** and then **jaguar animal site:.ac.uk**

What do you think of the search results? Are there any differences between the US sites (.edu) and the UK sites (.ac.uk)? Do they seem like webpages you can trust? Why or why not?

9. Let's say you'd only like to see the most recent articles written about jaguars in the New York Times.

Search again for: **jaguar animal site:nytimes.com**

Look at the buttons that appear below the search bar. One of them says "Search Tools". Once you click or tap on this, a few things appear. One of them says "Any Time". What are the different things you can change this to? Besides this case of only finding the most recent articles about a topic, brainstorm with your group about some other times when people might want to use something other than "Any Time". List a few.

10. Maybe you're bored with jaguars now and want to expand your searches a little bit. Now you want articles about tigers OR jaguars. If you searched for tigers and jaguars, you would get websites that had *both* tigers and jaguars in it, but that might not be what you want. You can use the OR operator for this by searching for: tigers OR jaguars

Maybe you're also getting bored with the New York Times, so you want articles from The New York Times OR The Washington Post or for a search within British newspapers instead you could use The Guardian OR The Independent

For things like this, you can use the OR **operator**.

Search for:

lion OR tiger site:nytimes.com OR site:washingtonpost.com

lion OR tiger site:guardian.co.uk OR site:independent.co.uk

Additional Tips for Google Ninjas

Calculator: You can put maths equations right in the google search bar to do some maths. Try out 6×4 or other maths problems. You can have Google do exponents with the ^ sign (shift-6). For example, if you search for 4^2 , Google will tell you 16.

Search for filetypes: You can search for results that are a certain filetype by using the filetype **operator**. So, if you only wanted PDFs about Russia, you could search for: Russia filetype:pdf

Unit Conversions: Google search will convert units for you.

Search for: **75 pounds in kilograms**

Or search for: **15 litres in gallons**

Dictionary: Use the define operator to find the definition of a word.

Search for: define:effervescent