



Advanced Google Searching

by Barbara Renick

©Copyright 2019 by Barbara Renick

Barbara.Renick@gmail.com

PART I: GROWING PAINS

A. The basic Google search page has graphics that change regularly; but there is also a more complex opening page at Google for registered users with convenient shortcuts as well as the basic Google search bar.

B. The mechanics of how Google Search works change even more often.

Example: 3234 “improvements” were made to Google Search in 2018.

C. Links to two online tools to better search via Google are at zroots.org/links.html in the Search & Travel column highlighted in yellow :

1. Google Advanced Search
2. SearchforAncestors

D. Google’s Advanced Search Template

1. The Google Advanced Search template allows the use of most but NOT all the operators that can be applied in a basic Google search. Example: The Tilde (~) when placed immediately before a word (no space between) tells Google to include synonyms of that word in the search results.

2. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING! Google keeps track of the types of searches made on your computer to better aid in interpreting what you are searching for in future searches. Search on Google at the Orange County FamilySearch Library for: *nancy bull married valentine warner kentucky*. Note the first page of results. Then go home and try the same search via Google on your computer. The results will be different. The same thing can be done on your home computer. Search today on Google on your computer for: *nancy bull married valentine warner kentucky*. Do the same search a month later (after probably using your computer almost daily). The results will NOT be the same.

3. Via Google Alerts you can get emails when new results for a topic to show up in Google Search which helps to cover new online content found by Google. Just type what are google alerts in Google’s basic search bar to learn how to do this (if you don’t already use it).

4. Google’s basic search bar has a new drop down menu of search terms to choose from when I type in a surname (for which I search frequently at Google) which is based upon my previous search

results. (Big Brother is watching and remembering.)

PART II: HOW TO SEARCH

A. Names: Google isn't case sensitive (so just type in your search terms in all lower case). Google is spelling sensitive (so use name variants like **zucknick OR zuknick OR zuknik** to find these spellings for that surname). Google recognizes the **OR** between each name variant and recognizes them as interchangeable. Google tries to correct what it thinks are spelling errors. Search for RENICK and Google will include results with RENWICK. Search for the first (given) name **Ocena** and Google asks if you mean "ocean" instead.

B. Limitations: Just like Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org, Google will typically tell you it found thousands of matches in less than a second...however when you get to about the tenth page of results (each page with about ten results) Google tells you something like "In order to show you the most relevant results, we have omitted some entries very similar to the 128 already displayed. If you like, you can [repeat the search with the omitted results included.](#)" Click on the blue link to do so. This is because Google only displays the first one or two matches from any Web site even though there are lots of other matches there you do want to see. One way to overcome this limitation is to use the **site:** command immediately (no space) followed by the basic URL then followed by your search terms. For FamilySearch the basic URL would be **site:familysearch.org** which returns matches only from FamilySearch.org.

Example of a site limited search: site:familysearch.org renick porter tennessee missouri

C. It is often simpler to use the Google Advanced Search template.

The template starts off with **Find pages with...** followed by five fill-in-the-blank boxes:

1. all these words:
2. this exact word or phrase:
3. any of these words:
4. none of these words:
5. numbers ranging from:

The fourth box (**none of these words**) is extremely dangerous for genealogical searches. It will NOT return a Web page result if it contains that prohibited word or phrase--even if all the other search criteria are there and you would very much like to see that result.

The fifth box (**numbers ranging from:**) is great for a birth year and a death year; or if you only know approximately when a couple married it works well for a probable range of years.

Find pages with...

all these words:	<input type="text"/>	To do this in the search box
this exact word or phrase:	<input type="text"/>	Type the important words: tricolor rat terrier
any of these words:	<input type="text"/>	Put exact words in quotes: "rat terrier"
none of these words:	<input type="text"/>	Type OR between all the words you want: miniature OR standard
numbers ranging from:	<input type="text"/> to <input type="text"/>	Put a minus sign just before words you don't want: -rodent, -"Jack Russell"
		Put 2 periods between the numbers and add a unit of measure: 10..35 lb, \$300..\$500, 2010..2011

Then narrow your results by...

language:	<input type="text" value="any language"/>	Find pages in the language you select.
region:	<input type="text" value="any region"/>	Find pages published in a particular region.
last update:	<input type="text" value="anytime"/>	Find pages updated within the time you specify.
site or domain:	<input type="text"/>	Search one site (like wikipedia.org) or limit your results to a domain like .edu, .org or .gov
terms appearing:	<input type="text" value="anywhere in the page"/>	Search for terms in the whole page, page title, or web address, or links to the page you're looking for.
SafeSearch:	<input type="text" value="Show most relevant results"/>	Tell SafeSearch whether to filter sexually explicit content.
file type:	<input type="text" value="any format"/>	Find pages in the format you prefer.
usage rights:	<input type="text" value="not filtered by license"/>	Find pages you are free to use yourself.

[Advanced Search](#)

Below these five boxes you see the words **Then narrow your results by...** and eight more boxes. Most of these boxes have a drop arrow on the far right side for a drop down menu to pick from, for example, a language and/or region to focus your search outside your local Google node.

When you are searching on Google in the United States, Google will typically not search its collected information from Google nodes in other countries. Genealogists need to be careful to choose a language the record would be written in which may be different than the region (usually country) where the Web site of the record repository, library, archives, church diocese, etc. is located. The **site or domain:** box can be used just like the **site:** switch as explained above to limit results to those from just one Web site.

Google Advance Search example:

Names: zucknick draeger

Language: German

Region: Poland

returns matches from the Poznan Project with the Web site being in Polish but many of the records being in German (DRAEGER being spelled without the first E but an A umlaut instead). Use Google Translate to easily translate the history of the project, instructions, and search templates on this site.

Use the **file type:** box to specify PDF files (the format most books are digitized on the Internet) to search for books mentioning your ancestors (even if the book is not indexed or have a complete table of contents).

Use the **last update:** to see if Google has found any changes at your favorite Web page (anytime, past 24 hours, past week, past month, past year).

PART III: RECAP

A. When using the basic Google search use more descriptive words and any of the search operators (like the tilde for synonyms to be included in the results) that you need to narrow your search. Keep in mind Google “improves” its search tools thousands of times per year and some search operators many change or even be no longer available in Google.

B. When using the Google Advanced Search template mix and match starting minimalist then adding more boxes of search criteria.

PART IV: FREE AND EASY-TO-USE SEARCH TEMPLATES

Although the site is listed as SearchforAncestors on my links page (and the URL for the site is www.searchforancestors.com) the heading calls it Ancestor Search. Beware of advertising on this site.

They feature a long list of free genealogy search templates that facilitate online searching including:

- Free Ancestry Search
- Easy Google Genealogy Search
- Ethnic Genealogy Search
- Heritage Scrapbooking
- Historical Maps
- Living People Search
- Quick Search Surname Finder
- Records Search
- Regional Search
- Roots Web Search
- Surname Origin & Family History Search
- Surname Information Search
- Tools for Genealogy
- World-Wide Databases