

# Basic Search Engine Handbook for Recruiters

Use Search Engines to identify candidates on the Internet



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# Introduction

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The idea of using a Search Engine to find information about people is natural to some and a totally new idea to others. Search Engines like Google and Bing can be a valuable addition to your candidate sourcing toolbox.

When you have searched your database, checked the job boards and scoured LinkedIn, you will now have somewhere else to turn as well.

This handbook aims to explain the basics of querying a search engine – add in your own industry knowledge and creativity and you should be able to track down anything (as long as it is out there in the public domain to be found).

We will start with AND, OR and NOT (the three Boolean operators) then look at other commands that will make your searches more targeted.

Look out for future handbooks coming soon from UK Sourcers...

# About Search Engines

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It is important to understand a bit about search engines before using them to make very exact queries.

Search Engines are the most common means of finding information on the web. They find relevant information by matching keywords or phrases to those found on (or attributed to) pages on the web.

Search Engines build a database of text retrieved from web pages by automated software programmes called spiders. Spiders are configured to follow links around the web and collect information about the pages they find. The Search Engine then builds a database containing all this information.

When you use a Search Engine, you are not searching a live interface to the web. You are searching information collected about web pages, saved in a huge database.

In this document, I will often use examples that focus on finding CVs. A lot of people upload their CVs to the web, particularly academics, contractors and technical people. This might not be the best avenue for your searching but it is a useful example to look at as it makes use of many different search techniques.

A search engine will only help you find CVs that have been uploaded to the public (or surface) web. You will not find any CVs that have been uploaded to a job board database (like Monster or Jobsite). Many people do not want their personal information in the public domain and Job boards want to make money by selling you a licence to search their database, so they don't allow search engines to index these documents.

There are already billions of pages on the web and some estimates say that there are up to 7 million pages added every day. It is therefore very unlikely that a search engine will ever index them all. No two search engines will have indexed exactly the same pages either but there will be considerable overlap for heavily trafficked sites. So, to access even just 50% of the documents on the web, you would need to use a variety of search engines.

You might find this list of Search Engines on Wikipedia useful:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_search\\_engines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_search_engines)

# AND, OR and NOT

## The Building Blocks of Boolean

Boolean logic covers the operators **AND**, **OR** and **NOT**. The name comes from English born mathematician George Boole – his work with algebraic logic is the basis of the modern computer.

### AND

By default, search engines interpret a space to mean AND.

If I were to type *mechanical engineer* into Google or Bing it would look for web pages with both the word 'mechanical' and the word 'engineer' on them.

### OR

This is the one bit of Boolean Logic that I find the most useful.

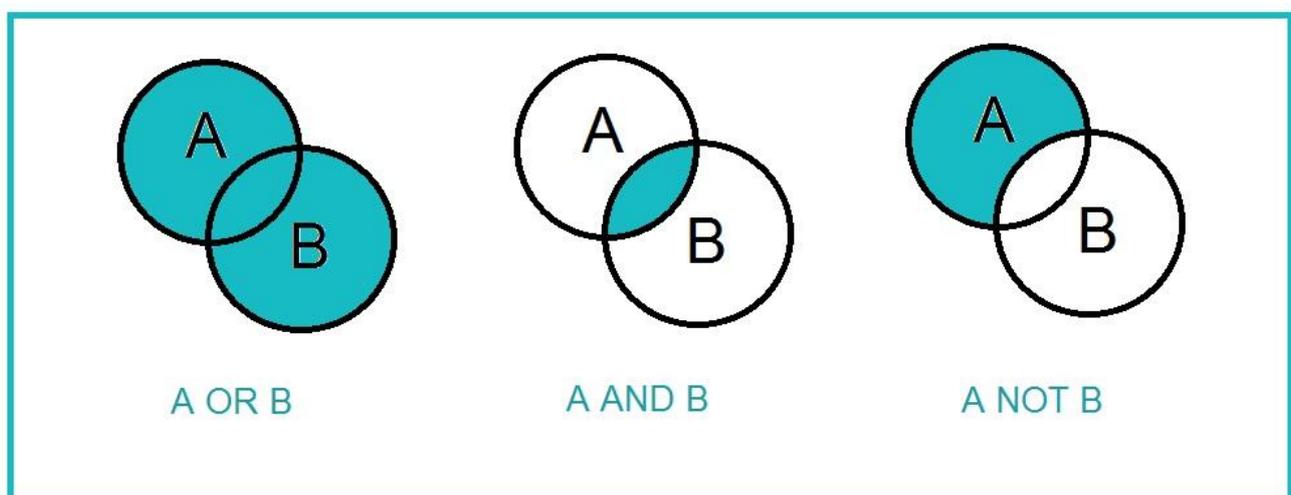
If I were to type *mechanical OR electrical OR civil OR software* into a Search Engine then I would get pages that mentioned one or more of these words.

### NOT

Google no longer recognises NOT, but you can still use the minus sign (-) to exclude terms in your search.

For example, you might find that when searching for CVs, using a search string like *CV OR Resume OR Vitae*, you come across lots of job postings and CV templates as well.

Excluding words, by typing something like *CV OR Resume OR Vitae -job -jobs -template -sample*, can be an effective way to weed out the results you do not want to see.



## Always Remember Capital Letters

When using these Boolean operators with a Search Engine, like Google or Bing, it is important to capitalise them.

A Search Engine automatically strips small words like and, or, if, but etc. out of your query. It only searches for what it considers to be a real keyword. By capitalising **AND**, **OR** and **NOT** we make sure the Search Engine takes notice of them as a Boolean operator.

Most job boards do not enforce this rule, so if you don't usually capitalise your **ANDs**, **ORs** and **NOTs** you have probably still been having success when you search there. If you capitalise these operators as a rule – your strings will work everywhere.

# “Quote Marks”, (Brackets) and \* Symbols

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## Making Boolean more useful

### “Quote Marks”

Often skills, qualifications, place names and job titles can't be expressed using a single keyword, a string of words or a phrase is needed instead.

Quote marks surrounding two or more words tell a search engine to look for all those words, next to each other and in that order.

Team this up with OR and you have a powerful way to look for people when there might be lots of different ways to describe them.

For example;

***“Health and Safety” OR “Health & Safety” OR “H and S” OR “H & S” OR “H&S” OR “Occupational Safety and Health” OR HSE***

When you include a keyword in your search, Google tries to be helpful by including synonyms and related terms in the search results. For example, if I Google *engineer* I will get results for **engineering** and **engineers** as well. Surround an individual word, like *“engineer”* with quote marks to get just that form of the word.

### (Brackets)

Brackets help you to organise your keywords. Put similar keywords used in OR statements inside a set of brackets.

For example;

***(CV OR Resume OR “curriculum vitae”) (“Health and Safety” OR “Health & Safety” OR “H and S” OR “H & S” OR “H&S” OR “Occupational Safety and Health” OR HSE) (UK OR “United Kingdom”)***

We would be happy with a document that mentioned one key word from each set of brackets.

### The \* Wildcard

A star can be used as a wildcard, representing 1-5 missing words. Use the \* as part of a phrase.

## Other Symbols

Google has never supported many symbols or special characters. If you have ever tried searching for email addresses then you will know that it doesn't really recognise the @ symbol.

Google is now starting to recognise more symbols on certain contexts though. They recently published this list;

- Plus sign (+) to search for things like blood type [ AB+ ] or the programming language[ C++ ]
- "At" sign (@) for finding social tags like [ @google ] or [ @ladygaga ]
- Ampersand (&) for strongly connected ideas and phrases like [ A&E ] or[ Brothers & Sisters ]
- Dollar sign (\$) to indicate prices, so [ nikon 400 ] and [ nikon \$400 ] give different results
- Hashtag/number sign (#) to search for trending topics indicated by hashtags like[ #lifewithoutgoogle ]
- Dash (-) will sometimes be used as a sign that the words around it are very strongly connected, as in [ twelve-year-old dog ] and [ cross-reference ]
- Underscore symbol (\_) is not ignored when it connects two words, like [ quick\_sort ]

# Field Search Commands

## Querying specific fields in the Search Engine's database

I am going to take you through the most useful of the field search commands. Keep in mind that not all of them work with every search engine.

### filetype:

This command is really useful for finding particular types of file. You can focus your search on just documents or spread sheets if you want to.

CVs are often Word documents or Pdf files. Try this on Google or Bing with some of your own keywords added.



*(filetype:pdf OR filetype:doc OR filetype:docx) (cv OR vitae) -job -jobs -template -sample*

Membership lists or attendee lists from events are often spread sheets or Pdfs. Try this with an industry keyword and location keyword added:

*(filetype:pdf OR filetype:xls OR filetype:xlsx) (attendee OR attendees OR delegate OR delegates) list*

### intitle:

This searches for your keyword in the title of a webpage.

The title is the bit that Google and Bing display in blue as a link to the webpages in your search results.

Pages with CV, Curriculum Vitae or Resume in their titles seem more likely to be actual CVs.

If you think about it – when you last updated your CV you probably saved it as “Curriculum Vitae 2012” or something similar. If you uploaded that document to your personal website, it would keep that as its title.

You can use this to help you find more actual CVs using Google or Bing

*(Intitle:CV OR intitle:vitae OR intitle:resume) (filetype:pdf OR filetype:doc OR filetype:docx)*

## **inurl:**

This command allows you to search using Google for your keyword in the url of a page.

The URL is the address of the page.

For example, someone who put their CV on their personal website might give it the address <http://mypersonalwebsite.com/cv> .

You could use this as well as intitle: to find more CVs like this

*(intitle:cv OR intitle: vitae OR inurl:cv OR inurl:vitae) (UK OR "United kingdom") -job -jobs -template -sample*

To search the URL field using Bing you would need to use their **instreamset** operator, like this:

*instreamset:url:cv OR instreamset:url:vitae*

## **site:**

This allows you to search for web pages from one particular website. Some people call this X-raying a website.

You could try X-raying your own company website to see how much of your content Google has indexed.

If you wanted to find pages mentioning the word Boolean on the UK Sourcers website you would simply Google

*Boolean site:uksourcers.co.uk*

It can be helpful to x-ray sites with lots of user profiles like LinkedIn, Xing and Ning.

I built a Custom Search Engine that X-Rays LinkedIn to find only UK profile. [Try it out.](#)

# Cut Out & Keep Boolean Strings

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Strings to copy, paste and adapt with your own keywords.

Find CVs as Pdf files or Word documents on Google or Bing:

*(keyword1 OR keyword2) (location1 OR location2) (filetype:pdf OR filetype:doc OR filetype:docx) (intitle:cv OR intitle:vitae) -job -jobs -template -sample*

Find lists of event attendees on Google or Bing:

*"industry keyword or job title" list (attendee OR attendees OR delegate OR delegates) (conference OR expo OR seminar OR meetup OR workshop OR "hack day" OR meeting)*

To find people profiled on their company website in the UK using Google:

*"Industry keyword, job title or phrase" intitle:"meet the team" site:co.uk*

## Don't forget Google Alerts

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[Google Alerts](#) brings freshly indexed pages that match your search query straight to you from Google.

If you find a search string that gives you back great results, do not forget to set up an alert. Millions of new pages are uploaded to the web every day. This means that you will not have to repeat searches for profiles you are always looking to find.

It is also useful to use Google Alerts for monitoring mentions of your company online or keeping an eye on what your competitors are doing.

If you have a Google account, you can get new results brought straight to your [RSS reader](#). Alternatively, you can have your results sent to any email address.

# About UK Sourcers

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**UK Sourcers** is a community run by Katharine Robinson (aka TheSourceress). It is a resource for UK recruitment professionals to learn more about Internet sourcing techniques.

You can find and keep up to date with UK Sourcers all over the web:

[UK Sourcers Blog](#)

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You can learn more [about Katharine Robinson](#) or find out how you can [work with her](#) by following these links to her website.