

# AOL Search FAQs



Learn tips to yield better searches, like filtering your search by location, date range, or specific category with AOL Search FAQs.

AOL Search delivers comprehensive listings and one-click access to relevant web results, images, videos, maps and more. You get the complete search experience: a wide variety of results in one try, without the need to perform additional searches.

Select a heading below to expand the FAQs

## — General FAQs

### — How does a search engine work?

When you look for information online, where do you turn first? For many people, the answer is a search engine such as Google, Bing, Yahoo or AOL Search.

Essentially, a search engine is a digital index. Like an index in a book, the search index takes available content and arranges it by topic and sub-topic. Each search engine compiles its index using its own frequently refined methods. Most indexes start with an automated program known as a spider or crawler that visits sites in a network (such as the internet) and uses keywords or phrases on each page to classify the information it finds. Once it has completed indexing, the spider uses links to other sites to find more new content to index.

The index for a printed book is alphabetically searchable. The reader turns to the back of the book, selects the appropriate topic from the list and uses the provided page numbers to find the reference. Search engines' indexes contain millions of pages, so alphabetical searching is impractical; instead, they rely on a different standard -- query language -- to help users find what they're looking for.

A search engine's unique strength lies in its ability to "learn" based on how searchers interact with the data it presents them, thereby allowing it to provide an additional element of context when a user searches for an ambiguous term. For example, is someone who searches for "eagles" looking for information about the birds, the football team or the band? The answer might depend on factors such as the season or the searcher's geographic area -- to which the search engine can adjust accordingly.

### — What are the features of AOL Search?

Have you ever looked at a search results page and wondered what all the features mean? This lesson will explain what each element is and how it can help get you to the results you want, quickly and efficiently. Understanding these features will allow you to get the most out of your search experience.

## Sponsored Links (Ads related to..)

Sponsored links are advertisements that appear at the top of the search results page. It is easy to recognize sponsored links because they have a slightly colored background behind them.

Unlike magazine or television ads that target a broad audience, search ads are tailored to what you are looking for.

Search advertisers participate in a keyword auction to purchase ads on the search results page. Later, when a user enters that keyword into the search box, the winning ads are displayed on the page. The order in which the ads appear for a given keyword depends on a number of factors, the most important of which are highest bid and keyword relevance. This combination helps ensure you are seeing ads that are most meaningful to you, and that advertisers are reaching the people who are most likely to be interested in their products.

For example, a national restaurant chain, a frozen foods company and a local pizza parlor may all bid in the ad auction for the search keyword "pizza." The frozen foods company may place the highest bid, but if the search provider knows that most people who search for "pizza" are looking for places where they can order take-out, this ad is less relevant than the other two. In this case, the frozen pizza ad may appear third behind the national chain and the local pizza parlor.

## More Offers

For some searches, you may notice an extra line of text below the sponsored links results. These are additional web offers, and they give you the opportunity to see ads for search terms similar to the one you entered into the box.

For example, if your search for "pizza" returned ads that were more general than what you were hoping to find, you can view targeted ads by selecting one of the More Offers links for items such as "frozen pizza," "pizza recipes" or "pizza delivery." It is important to note that if you select one of these options, all of the results on the More Offers page are advertisements.

## Organic Links

Organic links form the bulk of the results for most search terms. Organic links appear below the sponsored links and are ordered based on a ranking of their relevance to the query entered in the box. Organic search results are determined by a formula used by the search engine.

For some queries, the top organic results may be the same (or very similar to) the sponsored links. For example, if you search for "pizza," you may notice that the top organic result is for the same national pizza chain that appeared in the top sponsored link spot.

## AOL Featured Results

Because AOL has a content network covering news, entertainment, lifestyle, sports and other topics such as maps and weather, we sometimes display a result that shows some of this information above the top organic result. These "Featured Results" are designed to help you get to the information you want more quickly by offering results tailored the content that other users look for when using AOL Search.

The type of information included in the Featured Result will vary based on the query entered. For a query on "pizza" for example, you may see recipes and cooking tips from the AOL Lifestyle channel which features food content. Or a query on "weather" would show the 5 day forecast for your location.

## Search Suggestions

When you begin entering your query into AOL Search, you may notice that a drop-down menu containing search terms opens below the search box. This is the search suggestions feature that is designed to help save you time and eliminate typographical errors by offering you suggestions based on what

you type. For example, if you type "piz" into the search box as you begin your search for pizza, you may see suggestions for pizza coupons, pizza recipes, pizza ovens, etc. Clicking on one of these terms will execute a search for that term.

## Related Searches

Related searches are links that appear at the bottom of the AOL Search results page. These are terms similar to the one you entered that may be helpful in either expanding or narrowing your search results. If you select one of these options, you will see a new results page with both sponsored and organic links for the new term. For example, if you search for "pizza" you may see related searches for styles of pizza or for places where you can order pizza online.

## Search History

The search history feature is available only to users who have logged into the system. It is accessible via the Sign In link in the search page header and is intended to help you find and use recent searches. Your searches can be sorted further by type -- web results and images. This can be very handy for comparison shopping, online research and other activities where you may wish to revisit the same searches several times over.

By default, your search history is saved for 30 days and then removed. You can also manually remove searches that you do not wish to retain for the full 30-day period by clicking on the History drop-down arrow on the top right of the search page and click the Clear link. You can also delete individual search terms by clicking on the Go to Search History link and by clicking on the trash bin icon to the right of the query term.

## Advanced Search

You can narrow the scope of the results you receive by using the symbols provided in the below table. This can be particularly helpful when you are looking for very specific information on a wide topic.

Keep in mind that the more criteria you add, the fewer results you will receive. You may need to experiment a bit in order to figure out how much narrowing is required in order to get the ideal results.

Symbol	Function
+	Finds webpages that contain all the terms that are preceded by the + symbol. Also allows you to include terms that are usually ignored.
" "	Finds the exact words in a phrase.
()	Finds or excludes webpages that contain a group of words.
AND or &	Finds webpages that contain all the terms or phrases.
NOT or -	Excludes webpages that contain a term or phrase.
OR or	Finds webpages that contain either of the terms or phrases.

- By default, all searches are AND searches.
- You must capitalize the NOT and OR operators. Otherwise, it will be ignored.
- Stop words and all punctuation marks, except for the symbols noted in this topic, are ignored unless they are surrounded by quotation marks or preceded by the + symbol.

- Only the first 10 terms are used to get search results.
- Term grouping and Boolean operators are supported in the following preferred order:
  - parentheses ()
  - quotation marks ""
  - NOT + -
  - AND &
  - OR |
- Because OR is the operator with lowest precedence, enclose OR terms in parentheses when combined with other operators in a search.
- Some features and functionality described here may not be available in your country or region.

#### Advanced Search Keywords

Advanced keywords can give you even better search results so that you find only what you want. Use the following keywords to help limit and focus your searches:

Keyword	Definition	Example
<b>contains:</b>	Keeps results focused on sites that have links to the file types that you specify.	To search for websites that contain links to Microsoft Windows Media Audio (.wma) files, type <b>music contains:wma</b> .
<b>ext:</b>	Returns only webpages with the filename extension that you specify.	To find reports created only in DOCX format, type your subject, followed by <b>ext:docx</b> .
<b>filetype</b>	Returns only webpages created in the file type that you specify.	To find reports created in PDF format, type your subject, followed by <b>filetype:pdf</b> .
<b>inanchor:</b> or <b>inbody:</b> or <b>intitle:</b>	These keywords return webpages that contain the specified term in the metadata, such as the anchor, body, or title of the site, respectively. Specify only one term per keyword. You can string multiple keyword entries as needed.	To find webpages that contain "msn" in the anchor, and the terms "spaces" and "magog" in the body, type <b>inanchor:msn inbody:spaces inbody:magog</b> .
<b>ip:</b>	Finds sites that are hosted by a specific IP address. The IP address must be a dotted quad address. Type the <b>ip:</b> keyword, followed by the IP address of the website.	Type <b>IP:207.46.249.252</b> .
<b>language:</b>	Returns webpages for a specific language. Specify the language code directly after the <b>language:</b> keyword.	To see webpages only in English about antiques, type <b>"antiques" language:en</b> .
<b>loc:</b> or <b>location:</b>	Returns webpages from a specific country or region. Specify the country or region code directly after the <b>loc:</b> keyword. To focus on two or more languages, use a logical <b>OR</b> to group the languages.	To see webpages about sculpture from the U.S. or Great Britain, type <b>sculpture (loc:US OR loc:GB)</b> . For a list of language codes that you can use with Bing, see <a href="#">Country, region, and language codes</a> .
<b>prefer:</b>	Adds emphasis to a search term or another operator to help focus the search results.	To find results about football but that primarily pertain to the organization, type <b>football prefer:organization</b> .

Keyword	Definition	Example
<b>site:</b>	Returns webpages that belong to the specified site. To focus on two or more domains, use a logical <b>OR</b> to group the domains. You can use <b>site:</b> to search for web domains, top level domains, and directories that are not more than two levels deep. You can also search for webpages that contain a specific search word on a site.	To see webpages about heart disease from the BBC or CNN websites, type <b>"heart disease" (site:bbc.co.uk OR site:cnn.com)</b> . To find webpages about the PC version of Halo on the Microsoft website, type <b>site:www.microsoft.com/games/pc/halo.</b>
<b>feed:</b>	Finds RSS or Atom feeds on a website for the terms you search for.	To find RSS or Atom feeds about football, type <b>feed:football.</b>
<b>hasfeed:</b>	Finds webpages that contain an RSS or Atom feed on a website for the terms you search for.	To find webpages on the New York Times website that contain RSS or Atom feeds, type <b>site:www.nytimes.com hasfeed:football.</b>
<b>url:</b>	Checks whether the listed domain or web address is in the Bing index.	To verify that the Microsoft domain is in the index, type <b>url:microsoft.com.</b>

#### Notes:

- Don't include a space after the colon in these keywords.
- Some features and functionality described here may not be available in your country or region.

## Authenticated Browsing

Authenticated browsing gives you the opportunity to take advantage of some of AOL Search's more advanced features. You may login with any AIM or AOL Username via the Sign In link in the header. This helps us to show you results for your specific geographic area as well as to give you access to your search history.

### — What are some tips for a better local search?

We frequently receive questions from users who are looking for ways to find local information more efficiently. This isn't surprising given that the percentage of local search queries grows every year. Knowing how to conduct effective local searches can help you more easily find resources in your community. In this post, we'll look at several different types of local searches and some of the resources that AOL Search builds in to make your local search experience even better.

### — What are some tips for a better product search?

People are being much more frugal these days, so doing your homework before you make a purchase is especially important now.

Whether you're just beginning to research a purchase, comparing prices or buying a specific item, AOL Search can help you make your shopping decisions. In this lesson, we'll look at some techniques you can use to incorporate web search more effectively during the purchase process.

## Research your purchase

When you're beginning to research a purchase, you may want to start by comparing several makes or models. There are numerous sites online that can help you find ratings and reviews, and the best way to start is often with a simple keyword search.

For example, try:

- [digital camera reviews](#)
- [compare digital cameras](#)
- [digital SLR reviews](#)
- [compare cheap digital cameras](#)

If you already have an idea of which cameras you'll be considering, you can also try a keyword search for a brand or a specific product line. For example, try:

- [Canon digital camera reviews](#)
- [Canon EOS Rebel reviews](#)

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## — How do I build a great search query?

We rely on web search to help us find all kinds of information, from consumer reports to local news to book reviews (and even long-lost friends from high school).

But finding the information you're looking for depends on your ability to effectively ask the search engine for information; in other words, your web search results can only be as good as the query you build to produce them.

In this section, we'll look at building queries from the ground up. We'll start with simple keyword queries before looking at the effect of expanding and narrowing language.

## Keyword queries

Keywords are the building blocks of web queries. These are simple words such as the following:

- [Pizza](#)
- [Chicago](#)
- [Baseball](#)
- [Puppies](#)

When you type a simple keyword into a search box, the search engine will look through its index to find sites where your keyword appears and then return the best results based on relevance and popularity.

A single keyword will usually return results that are much too broad for your needs. In these cases, you can begin to combine words into keyword phrases. Try out the following and compare them to the simple keywords above:

- [Chicago pizza](#)
- [Baltimore baseball stadium](#)

- [Beagle puppies](#)

Now, rather than getting results that contain only one word, you'll get a list of sites that contain all of the words in your query.

Keyword searches can contain any number of words, but keep in mind that the more words you use, the fewer results you're likely to see. In order to help you decide what level of detail you need, take a moment to consider what results you'd like to get back. Let's look at Chicago pizza, one of the examples from above. What kind of information are you looking for? Are you looking for information about Chicago-style pizza? Restaurants located in the city of Chicago? Pizza recipes? Click the links below to see examples of results for each type of query:

- [Chicago pizza](#)
- [What is Chicago style pizza?](#)
- [Pizza 60613](#)
- [Chicago pizza recipe](#)

If you are still not finding the information you need, you can try refining your search some more by adding to or changing parts of your keyword phrase.

## Expand or narrow your search

Expanding and narrowing your query allows you to add or subtract from the result set by setting additional parameters for your search. A few of the most common and useful examples include:

### ***Search for exact matches using quotation marks***

When you conduct a keyword search, the results will contain all of your keywords but not necessarily as one phrase. If you only want to see results with the words in the exact order you specify, you can enclose the phrase in quotation marks to limit the results to pages that contain all of the words in order. This can be helpful if your phrase contains several common words.

Compare these results for a common name:

- [Jonathan A Smith](#)
- ["Jonathan A Smith"](#)

You can also use quotation marks to get an exact match for part of your query only.

Compare these results with the ones above. Notice that the name is an exact match, but biography may appear anywhere within the results:

- ["Jonathan A Smith" biography](#)

Use the minus sign to subtract keywords from the results.

If you only want to see some search results and not others, you can specify keywords to exclude from the results. Note that the minus sign has to be immediately in front of the excluded word (no spaces). For example:

Results about Michael Jackson albums other than "Thriller":

- [Michael Jackson albums -Thriller](#)



Results for all puppy supplies except crates:

- [Puppy supplies -Crates](#)

#### ***Use OR to find either of two terms***

When you use the word OR in your search you can specify that you want two separate types of results. This can be handy for comparing prices, statistics, product reviews, etc.

Trying to decide where to spend your vacation? Use OR to compare packages in two places:

- [Vacation packages Mexico OR Aruba](#)

Interested in seeing trends over time? Use OR to compare statistics:

- [US GDP 1979 OR 1969](#)
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## — Using AOL Search

### — How do I use AOL Search?

The easiest way to search on AOL Search is to simply type a word or a phrase that describes what you're looking for in the search box on [search.aol.com](http://search.aol.com), then click **Search** or press the **Enter** key. If you are looking for images or video information, try one of our specialized search features. Just select the appropriate link below the search box.

Tips to help your search:

- **Select your search terms carefully.** Use specific, descriptive words instead of general ones. For example, searching for [blueberry pancake recipes](#) instead of [recipes](#) increases your chances of finding blueberry pancake recipes.
- **To find an exact phrase, put quote marks around your search terms.** For example, use "[Charlie and the Chocolate factory](#)" to find content for the movie. You can also use hyphens to connect a phrase such as [brother-in-law](#).
- **To exclude specific words in your search, type a minus sign (-) in front of the search term.** For example, to find content about vegetables with no mention of zucchini, search for [vegetables -zucchini](#). Make sure to include a space before the minus sign (-), but not after.
- **To find content for two or more topics of equal interest, use OR in between your search words.** For example, to find information on either poodles or schnoodles, search for [poodles OR schnoodles](#).
- **If you don't get any results with search words, try using different words with the same meaning.**
- **You don't have to worry about capitalization when entering search terms.** AOL Search doesn't differentiate between uppercase and lowercase letters.
- **You don't need to use "and" between words in your search.** AOL Search automatically inserts and between words separated by a



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### — What is the 'Date Range' filter?

The date range filter allows you to see search results that have been updated within a specific time period. This is helpful for finding the latest news, for example, or for limiting the number of results that are returned for your query. The default time period is set to **Anytime**, so there are no time restrictions on results. If you'd like to see results limited to the last day, click on **Tools** and in the **Anytime** menu click **Past 24 hours**.

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### — How do I set websites to open in a new tab or new browser window in AOL Search?

You can set AOL Search to open websites in the same browser window, a new browser window or a new tab. Please follow the steps below to learn how.

To set websites to open in a new tab, a new window or the same browser window:

1. Go to [search.aol.com](https://search.aol.com).
2. Sign in to your AOL account.
3. Click **Settings** at the bottom of the page.
4. In the **Preferences section**, next to Open search results, choose the option that you prefer from the drop-down menu. The options available are:
  - In new tab
  - In current tab
5. Click **Save**.

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### — Search Verticals

AOL Search offers a number of search verticals to help you find the information you want quickly and easily. These are located just below the search box at the top of the search results page. The default option is always web search, but you can select another by typing your search term in the box and clicking the name of the category.

AOL Search currently offers the following search vertical options:

## Web

Web results are websites listed with the highest relevance appearing first.

## Images

Image search results are images sorted by relevance, with images of the highest relevance appearing first. A number of factors are considered when determining whether an image is relevant to your search request. Because these methods are

not entirely foolproof, it's possible some inappropriate pictures may be included among the images you see.

## Videos

Video search results are videos that are sorted by relevance of the video in the descending order. A number of factors are considered when determining whether a video is relevant to your search request. Since these methods are not entirely foolproof, it is possible some inappropriate videos may be included in the list that you see.

## Maps

Use the Maps search to find locations and directions at Mapquest.

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### — AOL Search Settings

#### — Search History

The Search History feature keeps track of your searches for the last 30 days, making it easy to return to your previous search results. The Search History feature is available only when you are signed in, and AOL Search will display Search History only for searches done while signed in.

- [View Search History](#)
- [Manage Search History](#)
- [Clear Search History](#)
- [Suspend and stop Search History tracking](#)
- [Turn Search History on or off](#)

## View Search History

You can view your Search History by clicking on the **History** drop-down arrow at the upper-right corner of the page. This feature is available only when you are signed in.

## Manage Search History

To manage your Search History, click on the **History** drop-down arrow in the upper-right corner of the search results page. This will show you the last five queries that you searched. If you want to see more of your historical searches, click on the **Go to Search History** link and it will show you all the searches for current day and prior.

## Clear Search History

AOL Search offers you a Search History feature that keeps track of your searches for 30 days. Search History helps you get back to your previous search results faster; however, if you wish to keep your search private, you can clear your history. To clear your Search History, click on the **History**

drop-down arrow and then click the **Clear** link. Alternatively, you can view and clear your search history by following the steps listed below.

#### To clear Search History:

1. Go to [search.aol.com](https://search.aol.com).
2. Click **Sign In**.
3. Type your AOL **Username** or **Email** and **Password** in the text boxes and then click **Sign In**.
4. Type a keyword in the search box and click **Search**.
5. Click the **History** drop-down arrow.
6. Click **Go to Search History**.
7. Click **Clear History**.
8. Click **Yes** to confirm.

**Note:** If you're using the AOL Desktop Software and continue to see your Search History, please [clear your footprints](#) as well.

## Suspend and stop Search History tracking

To suspend and stop tracking of your Search History, click on the **History** drop-down arrow and then click on the **Suspend** link. Or you can click on the **Suspend History** link on the [Search History](#) page. Suspending your Search History will not clear your existing history; you must use the **Clear** link to remove your Search History.

## Turn Search History on or off

We offer Search History as a feature on AOL Search providing you relevant search experience, such as saved searches and targeted special offers based on your earlier searches. When Search History is enabled, personal information about the searches you perform on the AOL service and the actions you take with the results of those searches may be analyzed to help create a more relevant experience.

It is important to note that turning off Search History doesn't clear previously saved search history.

#### To turn on or turn off Search History:

1. Go to [AOL Search](#).
2. If you're not already signed in, sign in to AOL Search using your **Username** and **Password**.
3. Click **Settings** at the bottom of the page.
4. Click the **Search History** section and choose the option that you prefer. The options available are:

- **Turn History Off / On**

- **Clear History**
- 

## — **SafeSearch**

Many users prefer not to have adult sites included in their search results, especially if their kids use the computer. AOL search offers you the SafeSearch feature, which prevents sites containing explicit sexual content from appearing in your search results. No filter is 100 percent effective, but SafeSearch eliminates most inappropriate sites from your search results.

**To turn the SafeSearch feature on/off:**

1. Go to [AOL Search](#).
  2. Click **Settings** at the bottom of the page.
  3. In the **Preferences** section, next to SafeSearch, choose the option you prefer from the drop-down menu. The options available are:
    - **Strict** - Filter out adult images and videos from your search results and text links to explicit content. This option will not display adult content when your search contains adult query terms.
    - **Moderate** - Filter out adult images and videos from your search results.
    - **Off** - This option will display adult content when your search contains adult query terms.
  4. Click **Save**.
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