



CWU Family History Handout: Internet Search Tips

Internet search engines can be powerful research tools but they can return so much information that we sometimes need to refine our search. Here are some tips and tricks that help to do that.

Keep it simple: Use as few words as possible and think about what words are most likely to be used by the author. Enter the key words, for example **Poverty 1800s UK**

Exact phrase: Quotation marks around words will pull up that exact phrase, for example “poor law”

Exclude from search: A minus sign will exclude unnecessary returns, for example if we wished to exclude news items comparing current conditions to the 1800s we might enter **Poverty UK 1800s -like**

Number ranges: Use two full stops to search for numbers in a range, for example **Poverty UK 1800.. 1850**

Wildcard: If you are not sure of the exact phrase you can use a wildcard to fill in the space, for example if you can't remember the full title of a book you could type **the * of the English Working Class**

Page titles: If you only want to search documents with specific words in the title you can use **intitle** or **allintitle** before the word or phrase, for example **intitle:poverty UK 1800s** would return pages with poverty in the title, while **allintitle:poverty UK 1800s** would return pages with the poverty UK 1800s in the title.

Site: If you only want to look for a subject within a specific site, for example **Poverty UK 1800s site: nationalarchives.gov.uk**

Filetype: This can narrow your search if you are only interested in searching for a specific file type, for example **Poverty UK 1800s filetype:pdf**

REMEMBER: An internet search will pull up anything that fits your criteria. This might include conspiracy theories and all sorts of poor quality research. You will need to be particularly vigilant in checking your sources. **Google Scholar** can be useful in this respect as it limits the search to academic articles and texts.