



MicroModule: operators

Operators

REVIEW Page

Below is the entire module on one page.

Why use operators?

Operators help to refine your search terms to get better results by enabling you to expand, narrow, or focus your query.

What do operators do?

Basic operators may instruct the search engine to include all terms in a search **dolphins AND football** or exclude a term **dolphins -football** from documents retrieved.

Basic operators can also unite individual terms into a unique phrase that must appear *exactly* as written in a retrieved document, "George Washington professional football".

What are basic operators?

Operators are usually symbols (like +, - or " ") or words (AND, OR, NOT) that change the way

search engines interpret query terms.

AND / +	Both operators do the same thing. Requires all terms to appear somewhere in the document, in any order. Example: +curriculum+high+school
NOT / -	Both operators do the same thing. Excludes documents containing whatever follows it. Example: high school curriculum not .com
" "	Requires all terms within the quotation marks to appear in the order written. Creates a highly specific phrase. Example: "high school curriculum"
OR	Includes any page with at least one of the terms. Example: high OR school OR curriculum

Operators

What are the most common operators?

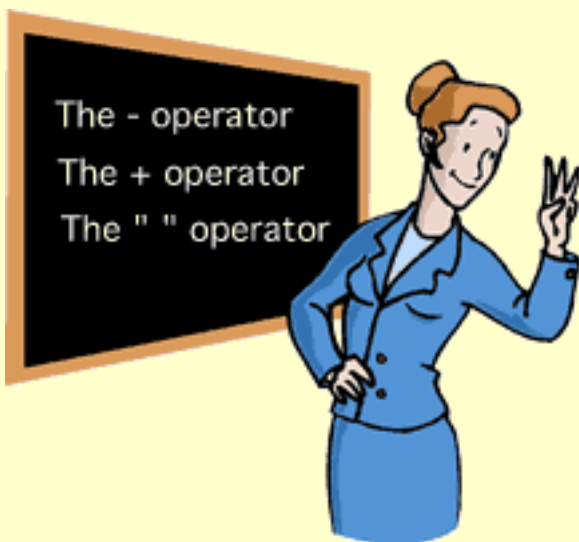
The most common operators are:

+ (plus)

- (minus)

" " (quotes).

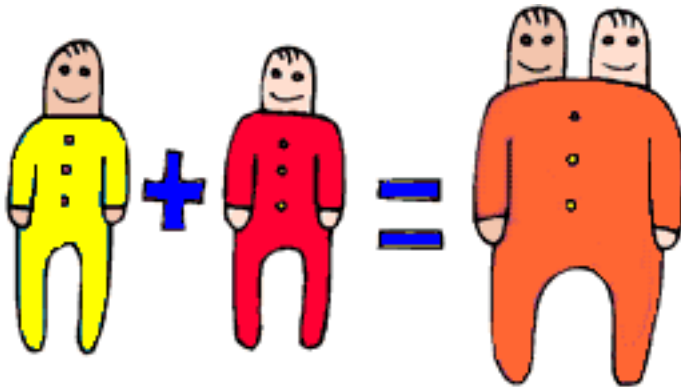
They are the operators that all the major search engines understand.



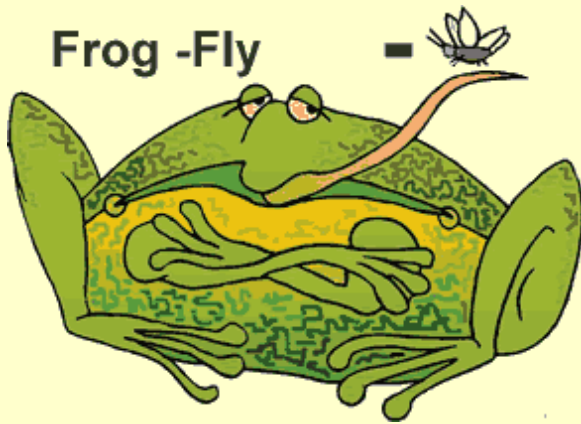
These are also the operators that are most frequently used in queries.

What does the + operator do?

The + operator tells the search engine to retrieve only documents that include the term it is used with. For example: +curriculum +english, will only return documents that have both of those terms. The + operator must be used before each term that must be included. For example curriculum + english +science +art will return documents that have all the words curriculum, english, science, art. Google and other search engines automatically add the AND operator between search terms. This makes the + operator unnecessary. Most search engines treat + and AND the same way.



However, with search engines (such as AltaVista) that automatically insert OR between search terms, the + operator overrides OR and will only return documents that include the term. For example, on AltaVista, curriculum english, will return documents with the term english OR curriculum. However +curriculum +english will return only documents with both terms.



What does the - operator do?

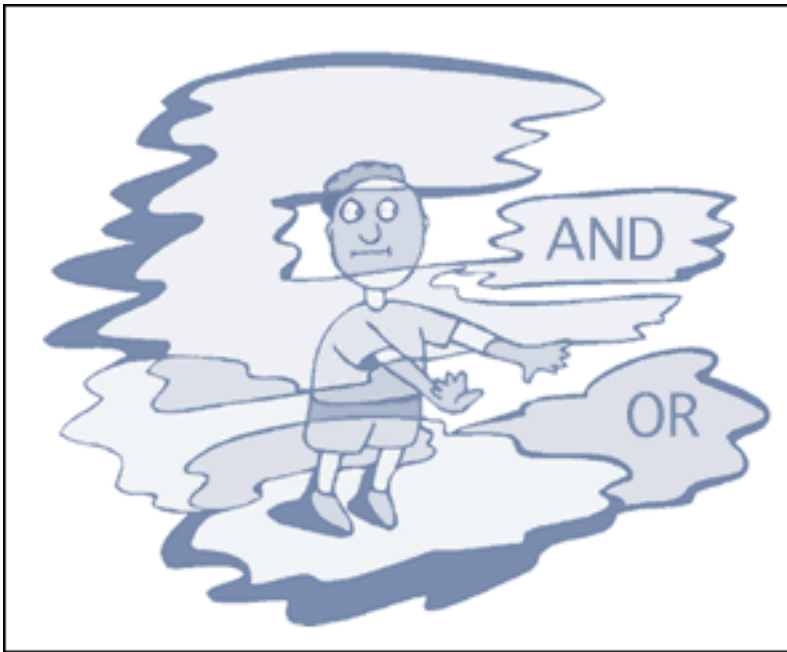
The - (minus sign or hyphen character) operator tells search engines to exclude documents that contain the term it is used with. Example: high school -curriculum would exclude any document with the word curriculum in it.



What does the " " operator do?

The " " (also called quotes) operator turns two or more individual terms into a single phrase that is searched for together and in order. The quotes operator can also be used to tell some search engines to include words that they may normally exclude, such as a, and, the or other common terms as, for example, "to be or not to be."

What are Invisible Operators?



Invisible and Powerful!

Search engines insert invisible operators into your queries. Each Search Engine handles invisible operators in a unique manner.

Let's see how invisible operators effect a sample query:

- curriculum high school

Google vs AltaVista: Invisible Showdown

Google automatically inserts the AND operator between each word. curriculum AND high AND school

As a result, Google searches for documents that have all three query terms: curriculum AND high AND school. Google then assumes these terms don't have to occur together or in the specified order, the terms just have to occur somewhere in the document.

AltaVista, on the other hand, inserts an invisible OR between your query terms. curriculum OR high OR school

As a result, AltaVista searches for documents that contain either curriculum OR high OR school . AltaVista gives a higher rank to documents with all three terms; however, you will still retrieve documents that contain only one or two of your query terms.

Why the difference? Each search engine chooses the operators they believe will be most helpful to its users. You can change the operators that are used in your queries by inserting or choosing visible operators. But it is important to understand what invisible operators are used if you don't choose for yourself.

Operator Placement

Where do operators go in a query?

The + and the - operators must be placed in front of and immediately next to (without any space) each query term you want to it to apply to.



**Like this: +Miami +dolphins
-football.**

The " " (quotes) operator must surround the terms you want to include in a phrase.

Like this "Buffalo Bill".

However, most search engines are tolerant of spaces between the quotes and the terms.

What are advanced operators?

Advanced operators include those that enable you to limit your search to a particular Internet domain, to a particular location in a web page, to pages within a site, or to a particular document format. For more information on advanced operators, see the Advanced Operators Micro-Module.

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End of Micromodule - operators.

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