

SAVVY SHOPPING: Search and You Will Find



You want to buy your grandson a new computer for school. It needs to fit into his backpack, have the features he needs now, and have the capacity to “grow” with him as he gets ready for college.

Your tool: the search engine. You type or speak in a few key words – maybe a question – and you get instant results: software has sorted through millions of possibilities to show you the best matches for your terms. Search engines have given us an easy way to become savvy shoppers. Search results can reveal a range of products and services; the features they offer; the places to buy them; and the range of prices. You can also find reviews and tips from people who bought the product and experts who can assess the pros and cons.

How fast you get relevant results depends on the words and symbols you enter. Try the search with synonyms and see how the results vary (laptop, computer, tablet).

Once you see a set of results that seems to be getting closer to what you’re looking for, begin to narrow your results.

- **Use an exact phrase** to describe what you’re looking for and **use “quotation marks”** around it (“15 inch” laptop computer).

- **Use the plus sign (+)** in front of any word for results that include the word (laptop + computer); **use the minus sign (-)** in front of any word to get results that exclude the word (computer - tablets).
- **Use AND or (&)** to find webpages with all the terms or phrases you enter (laptop AND computer).
- **Use OR or (|)** to find webpages with information on two topics (laptop OR computer).
- **Use different search engines** to vary your results.
- A few results that show up first will be labeled ‘Ad.’ That means a company has paid to put its product in the first results you see.
- If your first page of results seems on target, it’s still smart to look at several pages of results to see all potentially relevant items, not just the first few or those on the first page.
- **Experiment.** It takes only seconds for search results to appear so there’s no down side to changing search engines, terms and symbols.

And before you know it, you will be an expert on the features you want and which models have them.