Google

At a glance

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Next Lesson in Module B:

Mixed Media
Learn to access different types of media with a variety of Google Search tools.

Choose a New Module

Web Search Lesson Plan B1: Which Link Should I Follow?

Overview

Once you've completed a skillful search, how do you know which link to follow from search results pages? Students desire control over what they believe, and they don't want to waste unnecessary hours in pointless clicking through to off-topic and untrustworthy sites. Teach them to predict what they will see even before they click through to a particular result. In fact, by clicking on the best links, students even play a part in making sure they appear higher in the search results–kind of like the "like" button in Facebook! But it takes skill to determine which entries on a search engine results page are the most promising. Learning which link to follow will help students more effectively navigate their own learning adventure.

Objectives

Inquiry questions: Which link should I follow? Which search result has what I need?

- Students will learn to understand what the different parts of search results suggest about the content of the pages they offer.
- Students will learn to interpret these results in order to pick the best sources without reading every page.

Materials

- Computer with display for classroom (or 1:1 computing)
- Google Presentation Which Link Should I Follow?

Instructions

Use the "Which Link Should I Follow?" Google Presentation slides provided with this lesson to introduce students to Search. Slides that go with each section of this lesson are indicated by number [Slide #1]. To view information to go with each slide, click on the "View Together" button in the lower right-hand corner of the presentation:

1. [Slides #1, #2] Introductory slides

2. [Slide #3] Warm-up activity: Which link should I follow?

The teacher explains: "If you were cutting up a pineapple for the first time, how would you learn to do it?" Students guess how to search and anticipate how to read the search results. For example, the query [cut pineapple] brings back a full screen of videos that show exactly how to do that successfully.

[Slide #4] Then teacher explains: "Now, let's say you want to get a pet dog, but you think you want a pure-breed so you can compete in dog shows. If you search for what different breeds of dogs there are, how do you pick which page to visit?" For example, the query [different breeds of dogs] brings back pages with snippets that indicate various numbers of types of breeds (one indicates "over 195," another "over 300"), but in the middle of the page is the American Kennel Club, which speaks of "recognized" breeds. The teacher can ask students to recall what a snippet is (the black text in a search result, which shows where your search terms appear on the page). The teacher may also ask students to look at the wording about different breeds in each snippet and ask what it indicates about why the website owner is talking about different breeds of dogs. One possible answer is that the focus on number of breeds covered by each site suggests that many of these sites are trying to attract visitors by having descriptions of the highest possible number of breeds, whereas the language of the American Kennel Club suggests that they are primarily concerned with giving site visitors a formalized and official way to think about different dog breeds. The teacher may also point out that just reading the first American Kennel Club link leaves you with an undefined acronym (AKC) and you don't know who is giving you the information, but by reading it in combination with the link below you can clarify your understanding.

Alternatively, the teacher could have a search page open and take student guesses, but do not click on the link, as the purpose of this lesson is just try to read and interpret the results.

3. [Slide #5] The students experiment with different searches, and practice determining which pages have all promising-looking links, and which have promising and irrelevant links mixed together for their information need.

4. [Slides #7, #8] The search results page provides many kinds of information. Students can make a more informed decision about which link

to follow by learning what the additional search features mean. In this part of the lesson the slides will ask students to discuss and understand what kind of links are on a search page and learn to judge the search results page. If you are following these lessons sequentially, this is a chance for review.

Discussion questions:
"How does Google search work? What do these search features mean?
"How can they help you decide which link to follow?

"**Search results**
Possible Answers:
These are the organic search results. The results are not influenced by sponsored links. Google does not sell results rank for search results. Organic search results and sponsored link results work from different and separate servers.

"**Title**
Possible Answers:
The name of the specific page you would visit if you clicked on that link.

"**Snippet**
Possible Answers:
A description of the content that you will find if you click on that search result. It may be written as a description, or it may be segments of the text of the page that show the words from your query.

"**Web address**
Possible Answers:
Also called a URL. The market for the unique location that webpage occupies on the Internet.

"**Sponsored links**
Possible Answers:
Google allows for ads with specific guidelines. Ads must be relevant to the search, not be distracting, and labeled clearly as "Sponsored Links". Google doesn't sell search results.

"**Left Panel**
Possible Answers:
The column of links down the left side of the results screen. It suggests ways you might want to filter your results, and can be opened up to allow you to make a number of choices regarding how your results can be

4. **[Slide #8]** The teacher can explain that Google ranks results, showing you those that it thinks best fit your query first. Google uses a specific calculation to determine both which results and where results appear on the search results page. This calculation is based on similar (relevant) pages and web pages with hyperlinks to those pages. So, the more popular and relevant a particular website, the more likely it will be ranked higher and indexed on the results page. Google search is constantly being revised to make sure the most useful results appear on top.

The teacher may tell a funny story about an interview given by the head singer of music group Franz Ferdinand, Alex Kapranos. He once said he would know if his band had "made it" when they occupied the first place in the search results! Have they made it?

5. **[Slide #10]** The first step in picking a link is thinking about what you see. Look at the two search results offered on this slide and discuss what clues students see that help them decide which would be good to click.

6. **[Slide #11]** Understand the web address. Before you click on the search result link, make an initial judgment from what the web address tells you about the page:

- Is it from a place you've heard of before?
- Is it someone's personal page? (e.g., Geocities, aol.com; does the address have a ~ or % in it or contain a personal name or the words "user" or "member)
- What kind of domain is it? (.com, .gov and others may have different types of information–think about which you want; .edu can be very valid, but difficult to read)
- Is it hosted in another country? (.ru, .cn, .iz, etc.)
- If it is a special type of file (.xls, .pdf, etc.) would you expect that to be a good match to the kind of information you need?

7. **[Slide #12]** Explain that students should look over at least one page of results prior to clicking on anything. Review the whole prediction process on this flow chart:

- Think about what you are looking for
- See if the words in the search result match you actual need
- Check out the web address for clues about whether the page is good quality and likely to meet your needs
- Predict what type of document will help meet your needs–a book? a map? a spreadsheet? a video?

8. **[Slide #13]** Introduce instant search, as well. The search [colonial life in america] is a good one with Instant, as the results go back and forth several times between being helpful and unhelpful. Go slowly, and let students observe what happens as you type.

9. [Slide #14] Practice: Whole class instruction or individual work—

Ask the students to identify which parts of the five web addresses tell them something about the pages they mark.

Run a search related to something you are working on in class, and discuss:
Which link(s) should you follow? Predict the result and justify your choice.

Optional instructional strategy: Students organized in teams can share a Google doc with the teacher and they can practice reading search results pages and record their predictions.

Type [walk the plank] into your Google search bar very slowly. Students can record the different searches Google Instant carries out while you type?

10. In teams, students will create interesting questions and enter them as queries. Students can share and challenge each other with their questions, and see what links the other teams would chose.

Related Links

Google Search Privacy

Standards

ISTE NETS Student Standards:
3. Research and Information Fluency
Students apply digital tools to gather, evaluate, and use information.
Students: c. evaluate and select information sources and digital tools based on the appropriateness to specific tasks.

ISTE NETS Teacher Standards:
3. Model Digital-Age Work and Learning
Teachers exhibit knowledge, skills, and work processes representative of an innovative professional in a global and digital society.
Teachers: d. model and facilitate effective use of current and emerging digital tools to locate, analyze, evaluate, and use information resources to support research and learning.