

Things You May Not Have Known You Can Do With Google

Rushton Hurley

"Surely not," you say. "You can't fill an entire Rotary program with stuff about that simple page Google uses for searches."

Actually, I could fill a day-long workshop with such things and still have plenty left over! Is this a bold and impetuous statement from a moderately young technophile, or a hint that what's coming could make all kinds of things you currently do much easier? You be the judge.

Google was founded in the late 1990's by two Stanford PhD students, Larry Page and Sergey Brin. It's motto? "Don't be evil." However well it has kept itself from the Dark Side, it's certainly the case that the folks at Google have found mountains of ways to work with mountain ranges of data. Today, I'll share some of the simplest of them with you, and if you like what you learn, let me know and I'll launch an intermediate course in a future program.

Start with the Google home page: www.google.com (or just google.com, if you are one who seeks to avoid extra keystrokes; this works for all sorts of sites, by the way).


[Advanced Search](#)
[Language Tools](#)





Looks simple enough, no? There are all manner of things you can plop into that search field (the rectangle where you type). I encourage you to make this a play-along presentation by opening a second window or tab and trying out some of these goodies. If you're in too much of a hurry to do that, okay, but just in case no one else mentions it this week, you need to slow your life down a bit.

Start by trying a few things to give you local results. I live in Santa Clara, in California in the United States, and our postal zip code is 95050. The extent to which some of these tricks will work in other countries, I have no idea.

Start with putting this in the search field: weather 95050 (or your own zip code). Without even pressing the 'Enter' key, this came up:

weather 95050

weather 95050
weather 95050 **hourly**
santa clara weather 95050
Weather: 60°F in Santa Clara, CA 95050

 Sat 62° 47°	 Sun 67° 49°	 Mon 67° 52°	 Tue 63° 54°
--	--	--	---

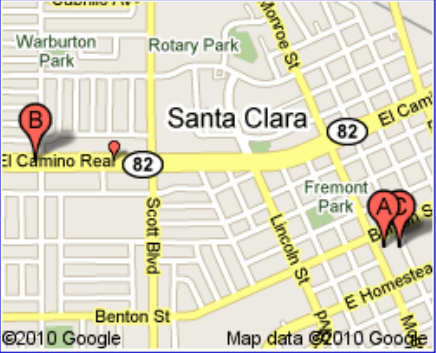
[Advanced Search](#)
[Language Tools](#)







Might have to go on a hike tomorrow.


Perhaps the leftovers in the fridge don't appeal. What if I put "Thai food 95050" in the search field? The result:

About 35,400 results (0.38 seconds) [Advanced search](#)

[Local business results for Thai food near Santa Clara, CA 95050](#)



- A** [Thai Pepper](#)  - www.thaipeppercuisine.net
1045 Monroe Street, Santa Clara - (408) 984-1931
 ★★★★★ 32 reviews, [directions](#), [menu](#), and [more](#) »
- B** [Dusita Thai Cuisine](#)  - www.dusitathaicuisine.com
2325 El Camino Real, Santa Clara - (408) 247-5199
 ★★★★★ 11 reviews, [directions](#), [menu](#), and [more](#) »
- C** [Jasmine Thai Cuisine](#)  - www.jasminethai.net
1211 Franklin Mall, Santa Clara - (408) 246-3943
 ★★★★★ 10 reviews, [directions](#), and [more](#) »




 [More results near Santa Clara, CA 95050](#) »

This time I did have to press 'Enter,' but managed to put forth the extra effort without too much strain.

Maybe I'll take my beloved to a movie after our southeast Asian cuisine experience. Next, I'll put "movies 95050" in the search field. Voila!:

About 87,800 results (0.27 seconds) [Advanced search](#)

[Showtimes for Santa Clara, CA 95050](#)

-  [Iron Man 2](#) - 2hr 5min - Rated PG-13 - Action/Adventure - [Trailer](#) - [Reviews](#): ★★★★★
-  [Shrek Forever After 3D](#) - 1hr 33min - Rated PG - Animation/Action/Adventure/Comedy
-  [Robin Hood](#) - 2hr 20min - Rated PG-13 - Action/Adventure/Drama - [Trailer](#) - [Reviews](#): ★★★★★

[More movies](#) »

Clicking that "Showtimes for Santa Clara, CA **95050**" link (in the purple, above) produces a list of movies and their start times for theaters in my area. Not bad!

Our local hockey team is the San Jose Sharks. One would presume that if I entered that in the search field, I'd get a link to the official site, fan pages, etc. Could there be more? Let's find out!

About 5,530,000 results (0.37 seconds) [Advanced search](#)

[San Jose Sharks \(51-20-11\)](#) - [Add to iGoogle](#)

Last game: May 21, Chicago Blackhawks 3 - **San Jose Sharks** 2
Next game: @ Chicago Blackhawks, May 23 3:00pm ET
sharks.nhl.com

Not looking good for the home team (we're down 3-0). Epic comeback, here we come! Point being, Google provides the record, last game, and next game without my having to go on to the next page. Cool.

I live in California, so perhaps I should check on earthquakes.

About 4,420,000 results (0.46 seconds) [Advanced search](#)

[Recent earthquakes near California](#)

	Time	Magnitude	Location	
	4 hours ago	3.9	Baja California , Mexico	Map
	6 hours ago	4.8	Baja California , Mexico	Map
	6 hours ago	4.9	Baja California , Mexico	Map

earthquake.usgs.gov

Data straight from the U.S. Geological Survey, that. A similar search for North Dakota turned up nothing. On fears that here, a big one might happen right under me in the next few days, I figure I should take a trip somewhere. Can Google help with my travel plans? Yup.

Perhaps I'll catch a flight to Japan. It's been too long since I've had good [okonomiyaki](#) (Japanese dish better experienced that explained), and I could drop in on Ryofu, a member of our club who lives there. It's just before 6:00a here now; I wonder what time it is in Tokyo...

time in tokyo Search
About 39,700,000 results (0.17 seconds) Advanced search

 **9:58pm** Sunday (JST) - **Time in Tokyo**, Japan

For that one, note that I didn't put the country name, but for most cities I probably would. Tokyo is expensive, of course, so perhaps I should find out how many yen the \$23 in my pocket would buy.

dollar in yen Search
1 U.S. dollar = 89.7907875 Japanese yen - [Disclaimer](#) Advanced search

Another one where I didn't have to press 'Enter,' this was. Perhaps it's better that it didn't also let me know how much the money changer would gouge me just for doing the transaction. Still, having a currency converter that close could be quite useful.

So the dollar will get 89.79 yen, eh? Man, I remember back in the day... I suppose I could convert that using a calculator. Got one!

89.79 * 23 Advanced Search
89.79 * 23 = 2 065.17 Language Tools

Google Search I'm Feeling Lucky

Turns out it even follows the order of operations, which the math folks (and anyone wanting a correct answer) will appreciate.



So, I go over to United Airlines' site and buy a ticket (using the credit card, given my cash situation). It sure would be nice if I could check the status of a flight using Google's page. Shall we give it a try?

UA 837	Search
ua 837 Track status of United Airlines flight 837 23 May 2010 - Dallas (DFW) to San Francisco (SFO) - On schedule Departed: 6:54 AM, Estimated arrival: 8:34 AM 23 May 2010 - San Francisco (SFO) to Tokyo (NRT) - On schedule Estimated departure: 11:11 AM, Arrival: 2:05 PM www.flightstats.com	anced search

Putting in the airline code and flight number will give me the info on any of its legs still to be completed today. The full info is on a very hip site you can find at flightstats.com. This also means that if you have a phone that accesses the web, you can get flight status from the Google page this way while standing in the airport.

Another way to plan for my trip through a tool for telling the future is to use a [Ouija Board](#), though the reliability of such a tool is certainly subject to some debate. Speaking of such things, try putting the following into the search field: Patent 1400791

Here's what you get:

Patent 1400791	Search
About 95 results (0.24 seconds)	Advanced search
Ouija-board - Patent 1400791  	
by HM Bigelow - 1921	
United States Patent 1400791 . Inventors: Bigelow, Harry M. Publication Date: 12/20/1921.	
Export Citation: Click for automatic bibliography generation ...	
www.freepatentsonline.com/1400791.html - Cached - Similar	

Yes, Google can tell you to what a given U.S. patent number applies. If I order one and am given a tracking number, you can put that tracking number into Google's search field and get something like the following:

9102901001343040680412	Search
------------------------	--------

[Advanced search](#)

 [Track USPS package 9102 9010 0134 3040 6804 12](#)
www.usps.com

Clicking on the link provides the status. Once the Ouija Board comes in, I'll see if it will be able to do the same thing.

Wait, my thoughts were just interrupted by a phone call from someone in the 501 area code. I quick type "501 area code" into the Google search field, and this comes back:

501 area code	Search
---------------	--------

About 1,860,000 results (0.24 seconds) [Advanced search](#)

[Show map of area code 501](#)
 Arkansas
www.whitepages.com

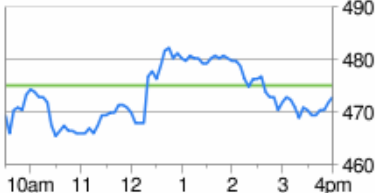
That's a buddy from high school! Nice that you can get a map, too, I'm thinking. Does this work for Canada, as well? Try typing in "514 area code" and you'll find it does. While we're on the subject of Montreal (where the area code is 514), I'll be doing a session at this summer's convention on using digital video tools to better tell the stories of your club. It'll be on Tuesday the 22nd at 1:45p, and like any session I do, I intend for it to be plenty of fun for you. Please join in! (That shameless plug aside, we can move on.)

I can barely wait for the convention, by the way! As of the time of writing, the convention starts in 28 days. I wonder how many minutes that is...

28 days in minutes	Search
28 days = 40 320 minutes	Advanced search

How about that? In about five and a half hours, I'll be exactly 40,000 minutes away from Rotary's [Annual Big Gig-o-Rama](#). Perhaps they don't call it that in Evanston.

Do I really have enough money to go to both Japan and Montreal in the same summer? I'd better check the stock price for my favorite company:

GOOG	Search
About 3,590,000 results (0.26 seconds)	Advanced search
GOOG - Google Inc. (NASDAQ) Google Finance Yahoo Finance MSN Money DailyFinance CNN Money Reuters	
	472.67 -2.34 (-0.49%) May 21 4:00pm ET 472.67 +0.00 (0.00%) After Hours Open: 469.06 Volume: 9,693,537 High: 485.00 Avg Vol: 3,928,000 Low: 464.40 Mkt Cap: 150.54B Disclaimer

Yes, it's a finance tool, too. Perhaps I'll sell a couple of shares in order to feed my travel habit.

Seriously, I hope that these shortcuts are useful to you in some way. We are living in a time when an ocean of data is immediately available to us, and intelligent folks at any number of companies - not just Google - are finding ways for that info to be useful to us. An interesting time to be alive, I believe.

President Larry and I have talked about doing more programs that help Rotarians learn about all sorts of useful tech tools, and if you like that idea, we're happy to do more. Please let us know in the comments section as you finish the meeting today.

Finally, if you want to learn more about search features in Google, what can you do? My advice:

About 310,000,000 results (0.34 seconds) [Advanced search](#)

[Search Features](#) ☆
Improve Your **Search** Experience. In addition to providing easy access to billions of web pages, **Google** has many special **features** to help you to find exactly ...
www.google.com/help/features.html - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

[Google Special Search Features](#) ☆
Google Features ... What file types are returned in a **Google search**? ... By adding these additional file formats to our **search** results, **Google** provides a ...
www.google.com/help/faq_filetypes.html - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)
[+](#) [Show more results from www.google.com](#)

Happy searching!
Rushton

Many of the ideas for this program came from the search curriculum created by Cheryl Davis, Kathleen Ferenz, and Lucy Gray, all of whom are fellow Google Certified Teachers. Find their work at:

http://www.google.com/educators/p_websearch.html

Feel free to share this with teachers you know.