

# Kicking the Google Habit: Top Tips

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Although Google gives “good enough” results most of the time, there are occasions when it is the worst possible tool for researching a project. There really are alternative tools and strategies that can give better results. The recent UKeIG essential non-Google search tools workshop, hosted by Manchester University Library on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2015, looked at the options for carrying out research. As well as alternatives to Google for general web search the delegates tested specialist tools for subject areas and different types of information. They came from a wide variety of backgrounds and during the practical sessions were asked to think about what they would include in their list of Top Tips for conducting research. This is the list:

## 1. Get out of the research rut!

Stop and think about what type of information you are looking for and which tools are best suited for that particular search. Experiment with other resources, especially if you suspect your default search tool (usually Google!) is not telling you the whole story.

## 2. Keep an open mind

You may have had a bad experience in past with a search tool or read a negative review. Give it another go and explore it for yourself. You may be pleasantly surprised.

## 3. [Bing](#)

One workshop participant said they were surprised at how good it is. It does tend to be more consumer/retail oriented in the way it presents results but as soon as you start using advanced commands such as *site:* and *filetype:* you will begin to find more research focussed documents. As well as general web searching, try it out on image and video searches.

Compare Bing alongside Google with [Bingiton](#), which was set up by Bing a couple of years ago. Type in your search and Bingiton displays the two sets of results side by side without telling you which is which. You then decide which results you prefer or go for the draw option (“can’t decide”). You have to run five searches before Bingiton reveals the search engine you picked. The results for our Manchester group were Bing 3, Google 7, and 2 that were a draw across all searches.

## 4. [Millionshort](#)

If you are fed up with seeing the same results from Google again and again give MillionShort a try. The page that best answers your question might not be well optimised for Bing or Google, or you might be researching a topic that is so “niche” or unusual that it never makes it into the top results. MillionShort enables you to remove the most popular web sites from your search. Originally, as its name suggests, it automatically removed the

top 1 million but it now allows you to choose how many to exclude (100, 1000, 10k, 100k or a million). An excellent tool for what is sometimes called long tail search.

### 5. *Site:* and *filetype:* commands

Google is not the only search tool that has *site:* and *filetype:* advanced commands. Most of the alternatives also support them (note, though, that [Yandex](#) uses *mime:* instead of *filetype:*). Use the *site:* command to focus your search on particular types of site, for example *site:nhs.uk*, or to search inside a large, rambling site. Use *filetype:* followed by a file extension to search for PDFs, presentations or spreadsheets.

### 6. [WolframAlpha](#)

One person at the workshop fell totally in love with this. “WolframAlpha for everything!” they said. Possibly a slight exaggeration but it was found to be ideal for answering the weird and wonderful queries that some of their customers keep coming up with. If you want to see what WolframAlpha can do try out the examples and categories that are listed on its home page.

### 7. [Zanran](#)

This is a search tool for searching information contained in charts, graphs and tables of data and within formatted documents such as PDFs, Excel spreadsheets and images. Enter your search terms and optionally limit your search by date and/or format type.

### 8. [OFFSTATS - Official Statistics on the Web](#)

This is a great starting point for locating official statistical sources by country, region or subject. All of the content in the database is assessed by humans for quality and authority, and is freely available.

### 9. [Carrotsearch](#)

This was recommended by delegates for its clustering of results into folders and also the visualisations of terms and concepts via the ‘circles’ and ‘foam tree’. For biomedical and health professionals there is also a PubMed search option.

### 10. Search for images by colour - Tineye Multicolr and Chromatik

[TinEye Labs Multicolr Search](#) searches 20 million Creative Commons Flickr images by colour. You can select up to 5 colours and move the dividing bar between colours to increase/decrease their prominence within the image. There is no keyword search option. Click on an image to see further information about it in a pop-up. Click on the title of the image to go through to the original Flickr page and double check the license.

[Chromatik](#) from Exalead Labs is similar Multicolr but you can also add keywords to the search and select the Creative Commons license you need. Unlike Multicolr there does not seem to be an option to click through to the photo’s page on Flickr but there is always a link to the photographer’s profile page.

If you are interested in learning more about the above and the other tools covered during the day look out for UKeIG’s 2016 training opportunities on our regularly updated [training workshops](#) diary.