



## LIBRARY

### Handout Video SLA 4a: Improve Your Search Results

Using a search engine such as Google, you will find an enormous amount of information. So much, in fact, that it can be difficult to find relevant information among all the search results.

Obviously, you would like to get as many relevant results as possible and to keep the amount of irrelevant information to a minimum.

How do you accomplish this?

Let's say you are trying to find information about *air pollution caused by particulate matter in Amsterdam*.

The most important question elements are:

- air pollution
- particulate matter
- Amsterdam.

You use synonyms in order to miss as little important information as possible.

As you have already learned, you combine synonyms by using the OR combination.

Remember to use double quotation marks in case of compound nouns.

Now search as follows:

"air pollution" OR "air quality" OR "air contamination" "particulate matter" OR particulates Amsterdam.

This will produce a great number of search results. Too many to go through and by no means all relevant. You now limit the number of results by adding specific search commands:

- For example, you can search specifically for PDF files. This could be useful, because many reports and articles are made available on the internet as PDF files.  
Add *filetype:pdf* to your search. You will now see that the number of results has decreased.
- You can indicate that your search terms should occur in the title of a page or document by putting *intitle: in front of a search term*, without an interspace.  
The chances of the results now being relevant are greater than if they occur randomly on a page. You will now see that the number of results has decreased even more but that the quality of these results is good.
- For your research, you may only need search results dating from the past 5 years. You can find them by clicking tools. Under *any time*, or *elke periode*, select *custom range* or *aangepaste periode* and enter the last 5 years.

The number of results that remain can now be gone through quite easily. Make sure however that the number of results is not so low that you miss out on important information.

There are other ways of limiting your results. One example is that of searching within a certain type of site. If you wish to find websites by American educational institutes, add *site:edu*.

If, on the other hand, you would like to exclude them, precede it with a dash.

You have seen how to search through a large amount of information effectively.

You can search through large databases in the same way - that is, first conducting a broad-based search using the OR combination, and then limiting your search results.