Becta leading next generation learning

Here's how...
to search smartly
for information

With billions of pages of information, the internet can sometimes appear overwhelming. So it's important to help your children understand how best to find the information they want so they don't waste time or become frustrated.

Everyone in the family can improve their online searching skills. Try out the top tips overleaf. Or visit a local library or a UK online centre to ask for help to improve your skills.

1. Got an address? Use it!

Save yourself lots of time. If you have the address of a website you want to visit, type it carefully in the address bar. Your children's school may have a list of recommended sites – just ask.

2. Choose a search engine

Three of the most popular are:

www.google.co.uk
www.yahoo.co.uk
www.live.com

Search engines designed specifically for young children include:

www.askkids.com
www.kids.yahoo.com

Try searching for the same thing on different search engines and see what results you get from each. Set the 'safe search' preferences to suit your child's age and maturity.

3. Know what to ask

Choose the best phrase to get what you want. For example, for information about the Egyptian pyramids, type 'Egypt pyramids' rather than just 'Egypt' or 'pyramid'. You don't need full sentences – just words.

4. Narrow your search

You can use double quotation marks to find exactly what you want, e.g. "geography revision sites". You can also use a minus sign to exclude information. If you want to find out about France but not tourism, type '*France -tourism*' (don't put a space after the minus sign).

5. Choose your country

Most search engines will provide a 'UK results only' option to click on so you can exclude information from sites in other countries.

6. Keep a track of good sites

When you're on a site you like, you can 'bookmark' or save it as a 'favourite' so you can find it quickly again. Simply click on 'favourites' or 'bookmarks' on the menu and follow the on-screen instructions.