

# How to Search the Internet



So now you're having a good ol' time surfing all over the web, clicking all kinds of links, dropping into servers all over the world. But you want to find something.

Someone once complained to me that the Internet was useless because when you tried to look something up, you got back four million pages to look through. This is not the Internet's fault—it is *your* responsibility to learn how to intelligently enter your search request to limit your results to meaningful ones. Finding what you want on the Internet is an incredibly important skill, especially since the Internet has become an indispensable tool. It's true that with so many millions of web pages and other resources out there, if you don't know how to find what you want, all that information is not going to do you much good. Blaming the Internet for not being able to find things is like blaming the car for bumping into things. You need to take responsibility and control.

As a web designer, it is even more important for you to know how search engines and directories work because you want those services to be able to find you. Knowing how they operate goes a long way toward helping you create a site that can be found by potential visitors. In Chapter 16 you will read more specific information about how to “register” your site with the various search tools; this chapter just gets you familiar with how they operate and gives you a few tips on how to find what you want.

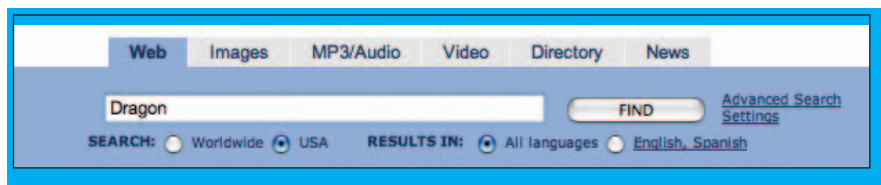
## Searching the Internet

There are two basic kinds of search tools on the web: **search engines** and **directories**. You don't have to buy these tools or download them—they are just there on the web for your use. They are web pages, just like the rest of the web pages you browse. Addresses for where to find the most popular search tools are on page 42.

You have probably already used a search tool—you type in a word or two, click the button that says “Search,” and you get back an extensive list of web addresses that may or may not have anything to do with what you want. An important thing to know is that when you click that button, *no one is running all over the world looking at every web page trying to find what you want*. No: every service has its own database of information. When you click a service's Search button, *you are searching through that service's database*.

Services search in different ways, and each service has different criteria for its database. Some use humans to sort through web sites, catalog information, and rate the sites. Others use automatic software called *robots* or *spiders* that identify a site's content depending on how many times a word appears on a page or how many other pages are linked to it. A search tool might look at the title of your page, the first paragraph, or other information to determine where your site belongs in its database. That's why you get three different lists of results when you search through three different services.

The following pages explain the differences between a search engine and a directory, with a few tips on how and why to use either one.



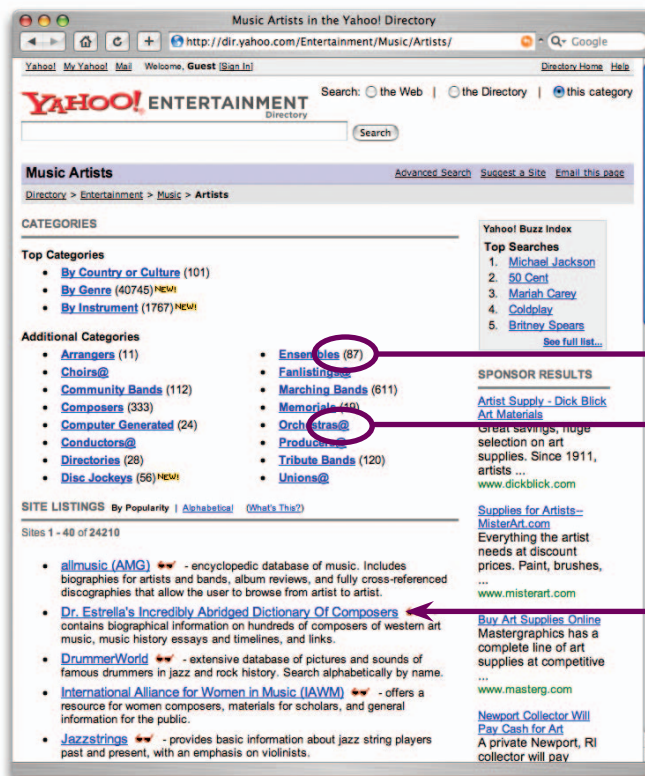
*Searching the web can be this easy: type in a word or two and hit Return or Enter. But to get **useful** results, you need to know what you're doing.*

# Directories

**Directories** group web pages into subject categories. Often the most efficient way to use a directory is to start with a topic and “drill” (click) your way down through various categories until you find what you’re looking for. Yahoo has a directory. Go to Yahoo.com and click on a web directory topic; that topic leads to various categories under that topic, each one leads to more categories and more subcategories. This is a great way to find entire web sites on subjects, such as Ben Jonson, auto mechanics, or Persian cats. It is *not* a good way to find your grandmother’s web page that is part of her office’s site, a current theory of anti-gravity that is one small part of a scientist’s research paper, or the brilliant twelve-page dissertation of Robert Burns that is on a Harvard student’s thesis page.

Many directories are compiled by humans (as opposed to robots), and they do not usually go looking for things to put in their database. That is, if a web site owner has not registered her site with the directory, it might not be found in that directory.

*Use a directory when you want to find entire web sites about particular topics, or when you know you can find your information within a particular web site, such as a college’s site.*



*This number tells you how many listings are in that category.*

*This @ symbol indicates there are more subcategories in this section.*

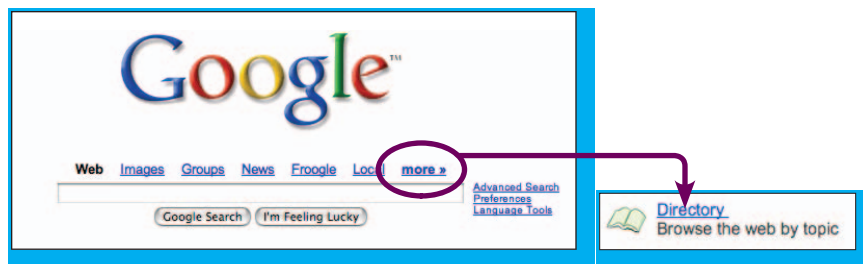
*Notice what an incredibly focused list of web sites you can find when you drill down through a category.*

## Google's directory

**Google** has one of the best directories, so it is important that you learn how to use it. Once you are comfortable with Google, branch out into some of the other directories.

Try this experiment:

1. Go to Google's web site ([www.google.com](http://www.google.com)).
2. Click the link labeled more, shown below.
3. Click the link for the Directory.

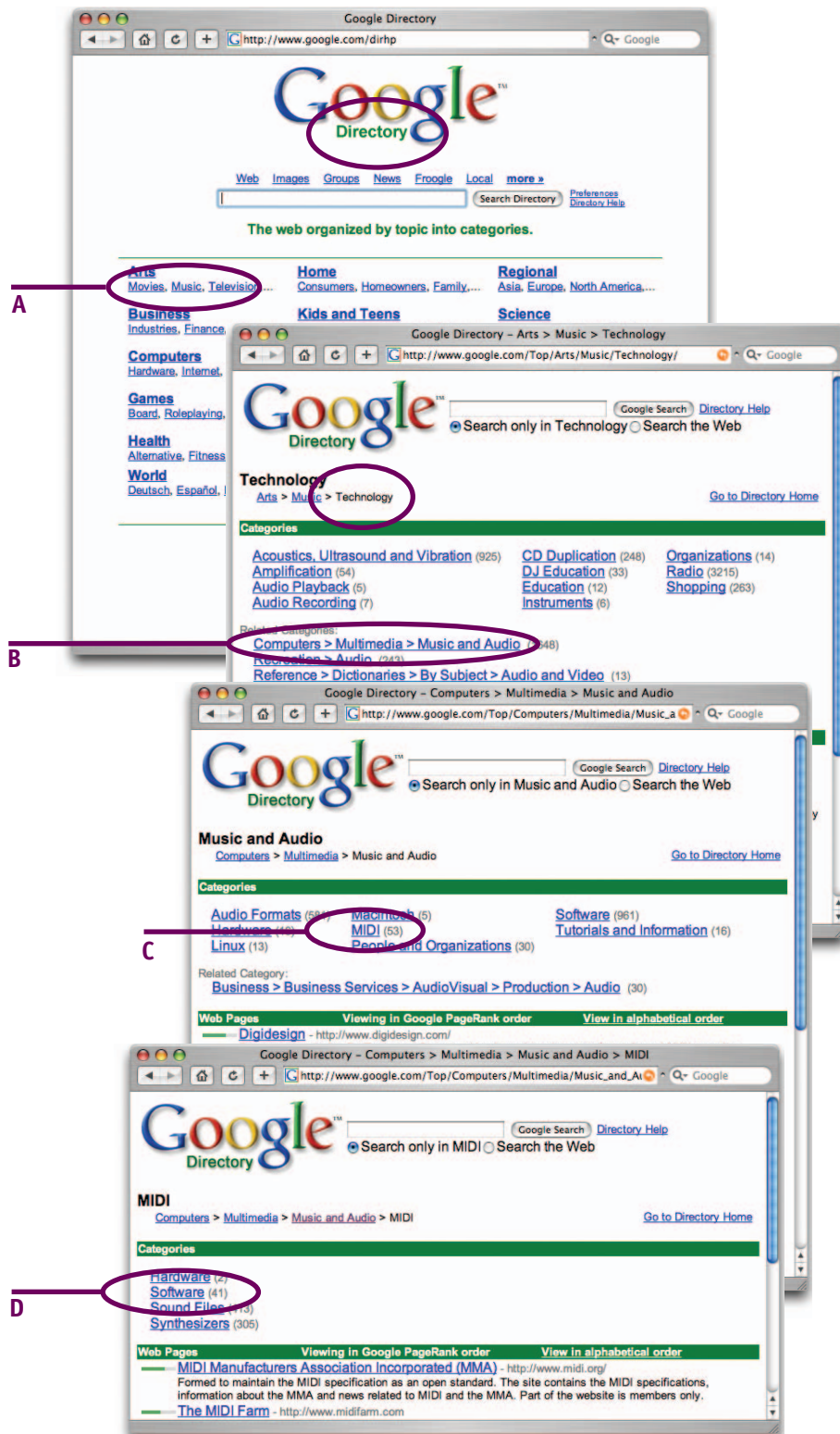


4. In the directory search field, type in “advanced midi tutorial” with quotation marks around the phrase so Google will find only pages that have the words “advanced midi tutorial” as one complete phrase.
5. Hit Return or Enter.

How many web pages did Google “return” (display for you)? None? Remove the quotation marks and try the search again. You’ll probably come up with a couple of hundred pages that have any combination of those words on them. But this is not the best way to use a directory. Try this:

1. Go to Google's directory web site again (follow steps 1–3 above, or go straight to [www.google.com/dirhp](http://www.google.com/dirhp)).
2. Click the link to Music (see **A** on the opposite page).
3. Click Technology (not shown on the opposite page).
4. Click Computers > Multimedia > Music and Audio (see **B**).
5. Click MIDI (see **C**).
6. Click Software (see **D**).

You’ll see a nice list of web sites related to MIDI software, many of which include tutorials. The point of this little exercise is to show that searching for *words* is sometimes not the best way to use a directory; it’s often more effective to dig (drill) down through the subjects.





## Search engines

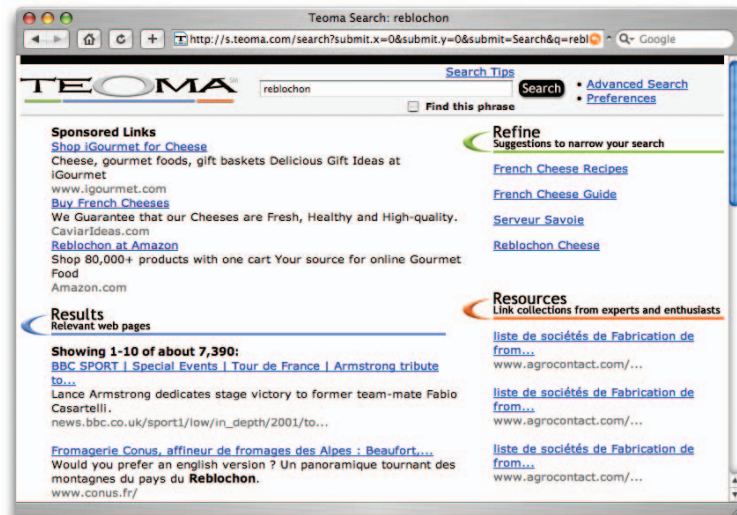
**Search engines** have automatic software “robots” or “spiders” that search through the web, newsgroups, or other sources and look for *words* rather than *subjects*. How each robot or spider selects information varies, but it is all gathered and organized into the search engine’s database.

A search engine is the place to go when you are looking for particular words, answers to questions, or tidbits of information. Some services allow you to type in questions such as, “Where was Abraham Lincoln born?” or “How is saffron harvested?”

Almost all search tools have both directories and word searches, so you can choose which way you want to find things.



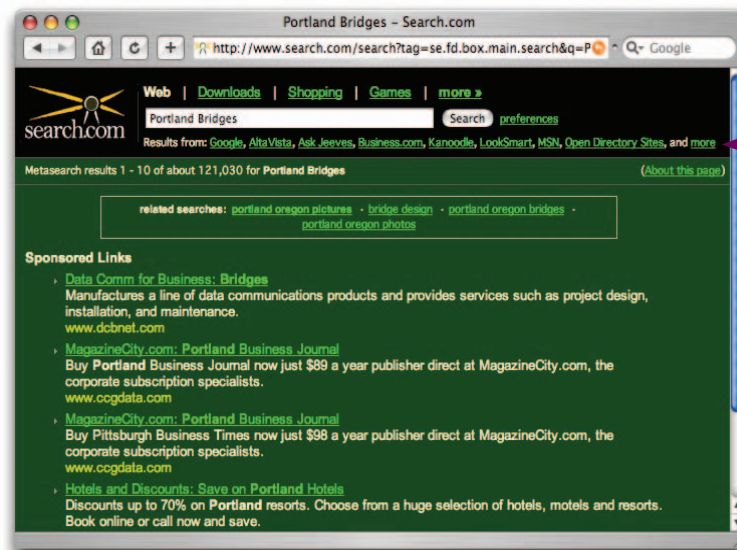
*AltaVista is a search engine, searching by words or phrases, and it also offers a directory.*



*Teoma will suggest new searches, refining your original query.*

## A few extra trips

A feature of some web sites, including Search.com, is that you can pass on your search to other sites directly from theirs. On the page of your results, you'll notice several links to other search engines, on the line starting with "Results from." If you click any of these links, these other search tools will automatically perform the same search through their own databases and display the results.

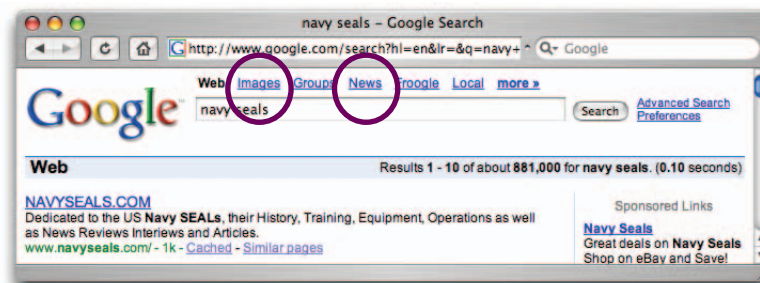


*Notice the box above called "related searches." This thoughtful feature gives you links to related options that might refine your results.*

Experiment with search tools like Google and Yahoo to **expand your search into images and news**. For instance, go to Google.com and enter "Navy SEALs" (caps don't really matter). Hit Enter and you'll get a list of web site results.

Now click the tab at the top labeled "Images" and you'll get a results page with images of Navy SEALs.

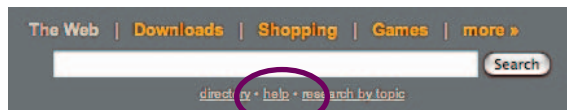
Now click the tab at the top labeled "News" and you'll find the most current news stories about Navy SEALs.



## RTFD: Read the Directions!

This is the best tip of all regarding searching the web: **read the directions**. Every search service has tips and tricks and detailed information about how to best find the information you are looking for *in their site*. Some need quotation marks to specify words that must be next to each other, some use a + or – symbol to narrow the selection, some use brackets, some use parentheses, some use “Boolean operators” (the words *and*, *or*, and *not*, *near*) and more. It’s critical to know how to limit your search or you’ll go crazy: if you find 17,243,912 pages with the word “alien,” you’re not much better off than before.

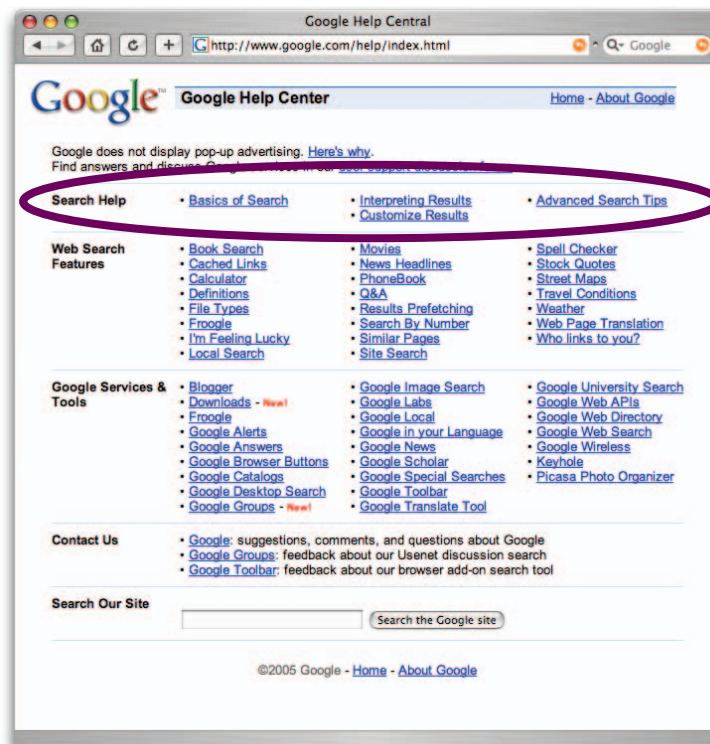
**Click the Help button or the Tips button, read the directions for how to search efficiently, and then follow those directions.**



*Find the Help or Tips button, click it, and read the information! This is the best place to learn how to search the Internet.*

*Reading this information will eventually save you hours of time and prevent lots of frustration.*

*And you'll learn how the search tools work so you can make sure your web sites can be found.*

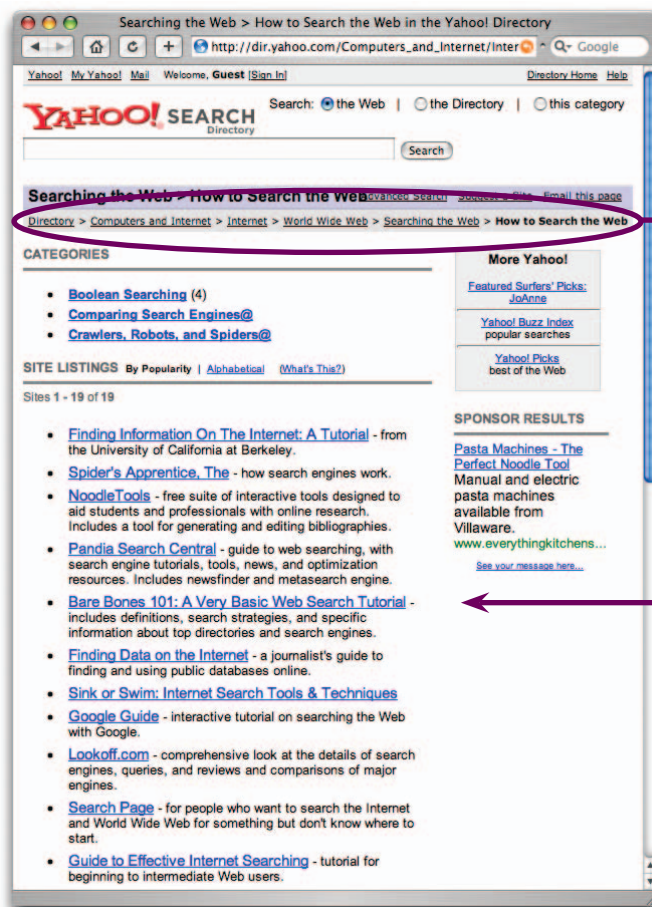




## For more information on how to search

Drill down through Yahoo or Google for online information on how to search the web. In Yahoo, try this path: **Computers and Internet:Internet:World Wide Web:Searching the Web:How to Search the Web**. You can also get there by drilling through the **Research** section. You will find links to great sites that provide detailed instructions on how to search, plus information about which services are best for various searches. If you really want to learn this skill (which you must if you don't want to waste a lot of time), you will find the best, most complete, and most up-to-date resources right on the Internet itself.

If you'd like a book for this information, get *Google and other Search Engines: Visual QuickStart Guide*, by Emily Glossbrenner, Alfred Glossbrenner, and



Follow this path (or something similar—it might be different at some point).

Look at all this information about how to search the web! There are tutorials, games, guides, newsletters, and more.

## Addresses for searching

These are the addresses for some of the most popular directories and search engines. The description that follows each address does not infer that that is the *only* thing the tool does—it just indicates one of its strengths.

<b>Google</b>	<b>www.Google.com</b> (click the button “I’m Feeling Lucky” to go straight to what Google thinks is the most appropriate site for that search term, good for finding colleges, specific businesses, etc.; be sure to click the “more” button for other really wonderful features of Google)
<b>Yahoo</b>	<b>www.Yahoo.com</b> (both a directory and a word search)
<b>AltaVista</b>	<b>www.AltaVista.com</b> (word search; searches web and newsgroups)
<b>Excite</b>	<b>www.Excite.com</b> (great for when you don’t know the exact term you need; is conceptual/finds related topics)
<b>About</b>	<b>www.About.com</b> (This is an entirely different search tool—it is created by humans whose faces you can see and contact. Specialists search the web for the best sites, categorize them, and maintain the lists.)
<b>Ask Jeeves</b>	<b>www.Ask.com</b> (ask in “natural” language, such as “What’s the difference between apple cider and apple juice?”)
<b>Search.com</b>	<b>www.Search.com</b> (provides access to a wide variety of search services, including using multiple search sites)
<b>Searchability.com</b>	<b>www.Searchability.com</b> (provides a remarkable guide to specialized search engines)
<b>HighBeam</b>	<b>www.HighBeam.com</b> (free trial period, then a fee; search magazines, maps, more than 2,000 books and 150 newspapers and newswires, radio and TV transcripts, and pictures—going back twenty years)
<b>Teoma</b>	<b>www.Teoma.com</b> (finds relevant web pages, lists related resources and suggests refined searches)
<b>SearchBug.com</b>	<b>www.SearchBug.com</b> (people and company finder; some services are free, others you must register for)
<b>SearchEngineWatch</b>	<b>SearchEngineWatch.com</b> (when you’re ready to make sure your web site can be found, this site is full of information for you!)
<b>VersionTracker</b>	<b>www.VersionTracker.com</b> (commercial software, shareware, freeware, and updates)
<b>Download.com</b>	<b>www.Download.com</b> (software, music, games)
<b>Shareware.com</b>	<b>www.Shareware.com</b> (freeware and shareware)
<b>WinSite.com</b>	<b>www.WinSite.com</b> (Windows software)

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## Don't limit yourself

On the previous page are the addresses of the most visible and popular search engines and directories. However, there are lots and lots more, and many of them are very specific, which makes their results very good. There are search engines that limit their finds to such specialities as water-related subjects; summer camps and outdoor programs; humorous sites; paganism, magick, and the occult; mathematical material; investing; the ancient world (appropriately called Search Argos); items for sale; travel; music; many different countries (including Estonia) and big cities; women's issues; dog breeders. You can find a list of all these search tools, and many more, by digging down through Yahoo's directory, starting with **Computers and Internet**. Then click **Internet: World Wide Web:Searching the Web:Search Engines**.

And while you're in Yahoo, go to **Yahooligans.yahoo.com** for lots of sites for children and those who care for them. Then click all those other buttons you've never touched, and see what they do!

So go explore! Find a search engine or directory or two and really learn to use it well. It's the only way to take advantage of the Internet.

# Oh boy, it's a Quiz!

This quiz will give you practice in searching. Remember, this is one of the most important skills you can have, especially if you plan to be a web designer. For many of these questions, you will need to go to a search page, click on the Tips, Options, or Help button, and find the answer.

1. In Yahoo, how would you look for web pages about Babe Ruth, as well as images, and also groups that are talking about him?
2. In Google, how would you look for mermaids that don't have anything to do with Disneyland or Ariel?
3. In AltaVista, how do you make sure to find information about the Vietnam war without finding every site with the word "Vietnam" on it, plus every site with the word "war" on it?
4. In Google, what could you use to search the web pages in a specific school or college? (hint: click "more")
5. How can you find a search engine that searches only sites that have to do with dogs?
6. Find the full text for the Declaration of Independence. What is the address?
7. Knowing that most major companies have web sites, what is the easiest way to try to find them without going through a directory or search engine?

*Answers on page 324.*