

# DEBATE, EXTEMP, AND EFFECTIVE USE OF THE INTERNET

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Looking for the perfect brink card for your disadvantage? Need a good article on campaign finance spending reform for your extemp file? Want to read a commentary on your favorite but obscure philosopher? Trying to find out what cases other teams are running? Seeking recent studies on Russian economic problems? Need information on speech and forensic scholarships you might qualify for?

Answers to all of these questions are easily posed and answered on the Internet. With over 300 million available documents and a huge number of Web sites the Internet is a researcher's delight. And the amount on the Internet doubles every 6 to 12 months. The Internet covers immense diversity. Every view, every agenda, every philosophy is reflected on the worldwide web. The cost is almost non-existent, only your electrical bill will show any effect and that is minimal. If you do not own a computer the public library and friends offer you access (And if you are lucky, so does your high school.)

There are a variety of ways to access the Internet. Netscape has the best reputation as an access program, but any program will be effective. Your local community will almost certainly have a connection service for about \$15-20 a month (look in the Yellow Pages under "Internet Products and Services" or "Computers--Bulletin Boards and Online Services"). There are also numerous commercial services that give you both

Internet connection and a variety of user-friendly news-services, business reports, and games Most aggressive among these is AOL (America Online, 8619 Westwood Center Dr., Vienna, Va. 22182-2285; has occasional overload problems). Others include *Prodigy* (632 Broadway, NY, NY 10012), *Spring Internet Passport*, *CompuServe*, and *AT & T WorldNet Service* (40 Grissom Rd., Plymouth, MA 02360).

Getting on the Internet is easy. But once there your knowledge of how to use it is crucial. There is no Library of Congress or Dewey Decimal system on the Web. You must know how to access and use a search engine, a good directory, and or a free link service to find what you need. The CDE Web site has the largest speech specific free link service ([go to http://aplaza.org/~bennett](http://aplaza.org/~bennett) and select the "Free Links" button on the left side of the screen.).

Directories use professionals to classify Web sites into a subject-related organization. The research results are similar to search engines. "Yahoo" is the most widely known service reachable on the web at [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com).

Search Engines record by word the most important and or the most common words in a document or Web. When you put key words into your search request the search engine matches your words to the words in its database(s) to give you a list of sites and information locations that are most likely to meet your needs.

Search engines are *wonderful* tools, like a very good index at the library, but they all have two flaws. **First**, they are "stupid"; they can only work off of the words you supply and cannot read any interpretation or meaning into them. Thus your word choice and how you submit the words is important. Careless or uneducated word choice can give you thousands of listings, most of which are utterly useless to you. **Second**, no search engine covers anywhere near the entire Internet. The search engine list I include at the end of the article includes metasearchers and the biggest search engines to help you minimize this problem. But only checking several search sites will assure that nothing important is overlooked.

## Hints To Help You Find What You Need on a Search Engine

The most common mistake is to use too few words in your search. There are very effective ways to structure a research question to target and get the results you need.

To help you understand what you should do let's use an example. Suppose you are in Lincoln Douglas and are researching the topic "Capitalism is superior to socialism as a means of achieving economic justice". Using the information contained in this topic statement, you will see how an effective job of research can be built following a ten step process.

Guideline	Example	Explanation Why It's Important
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[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
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And, finally, there is rule #11:

Use your **Home Page**. At the start of every search engine there is a home page, a first page, that does at least two things: it asks you what you want it to search for, and it gives you ways to learn more about how this particular search engine works. Search engines do *not* all follow the same organization, they do *not* all follow Boolean logic. Like people search engines differ in what makes them tick and how they are best utilized.

## Finding Good Search Engines and Directories

There are three types or of tools to help you get started: **Metasearchers**, **Search Engines**, and **Speciality Directories**.

There are over 1,000 search services on the Web. They vary greatly in size and quality. For debaters and extempers just getting comfortable with computers, or still open to improving their skills, the following is a good cross-section of some of the best free tools available.

### Metasearchers:

1. Inference FIND.

<http://www.inference.com/infind/>

The first search tool that calls out in parallel many of the best search engines (WebCrawler, Yahoo, Lycos, Alta Vista, InfoSeek, and Excite). They merge the result, remove redundancies, and clusters the results in understandable groups.

2. Metacrawler:

<http://www.metacrawler.com>

The home page has a lot of useful options plus the basic good search features.

3. The Internet Sleuth:

<http://www.isleuth.com/>

Extempers might want to start here if you are going to use a metasearcher because it not only has a good search ability, but also several news connections noted on its "home" or front page.

### Search Links:

1. *Northern Light*. This search site has two extra features, in addition to a solid search base. First, it supplies many full articles from 3400 magazines, journals, books,

newspapers, and newswires. Second, it uses a "Folders" approach that is easily learned and helps you better organize your search.

<http://www.northernlight.com/search.html>

2. *InfoSeek*: Good news, search tips, tools. Updated daily, includes automatic name recognition in the search engine. Strong on finding all word variants (e.g. you put in "mice" it will also check "mouse"). Good for recent brinks, extemp articles.

**Check** : <http://www.infoseek.com> **or**

<http://www2.infoseek.com/Home/Home.html>

3. *HotBot*. Sharp web-crawling index. Has explicit Boolean searching. Usually ranked first or second-best in search engine quality polls next to AltaVista. (AltaVista is included in the Inference FIND Metasearcher). HotBot includes over 110 million pages!

Search: <http://www.hotbot.com/search.asp>

For those with a big budget **Lexis** is an up-to-date very large data base that provides full articles, not just bibliographies or abstracts. It is widely used by the richer private high schools as well as many college speech teams across the country.