

Some advice for doing internet searches



The translator's first step when searching for a terminological equivalent is to look in **dictionaries**, encyclopaedias, etc.

If you find a dictionary entry with one or more semantically equivalent terms, your search is over – as long as you are sure that you are working within the same **context** in the two languages. If there is any doubt, you should look up the meaning of the word in the **original** as well as **target languages** (in monolingual encyclopaedias, parallel texts, etc.). The problem is that one doesn't have the entire Washington library at hand and at times the word simply does not show up in any dictionary.

Almost everything can be found in the Internet, but one must know how to search.

At first, it should be kept in mind that there are many search engines - and even **sites to search for search engines** themselves. We recommend AltaVista, as its coverage includes many more pages (approx 30%) than other engines. In addition, one can choose the search language – highly useful for the translator. Should you fail to find something with AltaVista, try Lycos, or Google.

You can consult **EuroDicAutom** (an EU language database with numerous entries of all kinds). Meanwhile, many **glossaries** to be found on the web are not recommended; they tend to be quite incomplete. You can waste a lot of time searching in one after another, often not finding what you are looking for.

You can take a look at the **customer's web page**.

You can search for the word in the source language, so that the meaning can be derived from multiple contexts. You may even find some **photographs**.

You can take a look at the different options listed in the dictionaries, to see which, if any, is used in a similar context.



You can intuitively invent a possible translation of the term and see if it exists. For example, we were recently searching for the Spanish translation of the English term "quintile". As it did not appear in any dictionary, we searched for "quintilo" on the web and, sure enough, found that it exists and is used in the same context.

You can try entering the original language term into the search engine, but clicking the "English pages only" option. If you're in luck, the word may appear in the original language in parentheses, preceded by its equivalent in English (as, in fact, we have done in many of our own translations).

Combined search engine tools are quite useful in quickly finding what you are looking for.

Always enter your search words in **small case letters**, as the search engine will respect upper case (unless this distinction is important in the search, as with abbreviations or acronyms, for example).

Placing a compound term or phrase **between quotes** indicates that you are searching for that complete term, as written. The search engine will only show pages in which that exact term appears.

If you are looking for a **compound term** but are not sure of the connecting words, you can use the **"+" symbol** (something + something).

The plus (+) sign can also be used when you have a very general term, and guess that another term x will most likely accompany it on the pages that may be of use, although x is not directly linked to what you are searching for.

The **asterisk** can be used to search for an incomplete word (someth*, *ething).

Intuition backed by **experience** is, in general, quite important when doing internet searches.