



Introduction

I use Google every day. I've been using it every day since it first launched—before it launched, actually, when it still had the word “beta” on its home page. I use Google because it's easy to use, and because it delivers quality results.

I'm not unusual, of course. Google is the most-used search site on the Web, and most people choose it for the same reason I do—ease-of-use and effectiveness. That's not news.

What is news, for a lot of users, anyway, is that Google is more than just simple search. Most users don't know that they can fine-tune their search in a number of interesting ways, or that they can use Google to find pictures and news articles and compact discs, or that they can use the Google search box to perform mathematical calculations and conversions, or that Google can function as a spell checker or dictionary.

It's also news to most users that Google offers a variety of products and services that have little or nothing to with web search. Google runs the largest blogging community on the Web, hosts an archive of Usenet news articles, distributes a top-notch picture-editing program, and provides free web-based email services. You might not get all this from looking at Google's attractively austere search page, but it's there, nonetheless.

All these "hidden" features are what makes Google so interesting, at least to me, and are why I wrote this book. I wanted to show other users all the cool and useful stuff I've discovered in the Google family of sites, and to share some of the tips and tricks I've developed over the years for getting the most out of Google's various products and services.

That's what *Googlepedia* is—a guide to everything that Google has to offer. It's not just web search (although I cover that, in much depth); *Googlepedia* also covers Gmail and Google Maps and Picasa and every other application and service that has come out of Google's headquarters—as well as services that Google acquired along the way, such as Blogger and YouTube. There's plenty of how-to information, of course, but also a lot of tricks and advice that even the most experienced user will appreciate.

I should note, however, that while I know a lot about what Google does and how it works, I'm not a Google insider. I don't work for Google, and had no official contact with Google while writing this book. That means I don't always take the company line; I'll tell you, as honestly as possible, when Google gets it right, when Google needs improvement, and when Google just plain sucks. (The company isn't perfect.) I'm not obligated to put on a positive face, which means you'll get the straight poop, good or bad.

What's in This Book

Google isn't just web search; the company offers a lot of different products and services, all of which I discuss somewhere in this book. Because of everything that Google does, this is a long book—46 chapters in all, organized into 10 major sections:

- **Part I: Basic Searches** provides an inside look at Google (the company and the technology), and then shows you the best ways to use Google web search and the Google Directory.
- **Part II: Specialized Searches** discusses all the many narrow searches Google lets you conduct, from phone number lookup and blog searches to searches for scholarly information and word definitions.

- **Part III: Additional Search Features** shows you how to customize Google, use SafeSearch content filtering, use Google in different languages, and use Google as a calculator and a converter (really!).
- **Part IV: Shopping and Product Searches** guides you through using Google Product Search (formerly known as Froogle), Google Base, and Google Checkout.
- **Part V: Maps and Directions** is all about Google Maps, Google Earth, and creating your own Google Maps mashups.
- **Part VI: Communications** shows you why Google isn't just about search; we'll discuss emailing with Gmail, instant messaging with Google Talk, and blogging with Blogger.
- **Part VII: Multimedia** is all about pictures and videos, courtesy of Google Images, Google Video, and the uber-popular YouTube video sharing site.
- **Part VIII: Other Google Services** discusses a variety of Google's search-related and nonsearch services, including Google Book Search, Google Groups, Google News, and Google's services for mobile phones.
- **Part IX: Google Applications** presents Google's software and web-based applications, including Google Toolbar, iGoogle, Google Desktop, Google Calendar, Google Reader, Google Docs & Spreadsheets, Picasa, Google Pack, Google Apps, and all the upcoming applications being developed in Google Labs.
- **Part X: Google for Your Website** discusses Google's tools for developers and businesses, including how to improve your site's PageRank, make money with Google AdWords and AdSense, analyze your site traffic, add Google search to your website, create your own web pages, and even develop your own custom search applications.

There are also three appendixes that present useful reference information. Appendix A is the Google Site Directory (a complete listing of URLs for all of Google's websites), Appendix B presents Google's country-specific sites, and Appendix C lists Google's advanced search operators. Handy references, all. If you're wondering what's new in this second edition, the answer is "a lot." That's because the Googleverse is constantly changing; not a week goes by without some new feature being added or some old function being improved upon. To name just a few examples of new features covered in this edition that weren't around when the first edition was published, one needs to look no further than YouTube, Google Docs & Spreadsheets, Google Checkout,

Google Notebook, Google Reader, iGoogle, Picasa Web Albums, Google Analytics, Google Page Creator, and Google Gears. And that's just the new features; I've updated all the coverage in the book to reflect Google's current status quo.

Who Can Use This Book

Googlepedia can be used by any level of user; you don't have to be a search expert or application developer to find something of value within these pages. That said, I think this book has particular appeal to more experienced or interested users, as a lot of advanced features are presented. Still, even if you've never used Google (or Gmail or Google Maps or whatever) before, you'll find a lot of useful information here.

How to Use This Book

I hope that this book is easy enough to read that you don't need instructions. That said, there are a few elements that bear explaining.

First, there are several special elements in this book, presented in what we in the publishing business call "margin notes." There are different types of margin notes for different types of information, as you see here.

note This is a note that presents information of interest, even if it isn't wholly relevant to the discussion in the main text.

tip This is a tip that might prove useful for whatever it is you're in the process of doing.

caution This is a caution that something you might accidentally do might have undesirable results.

In most chapters you'll also find some personal commentary, presented in the form of a sidebar. These sections are meant to be read separately, as they exist "outside" the main text. And remember—these sidebars are my opinions only, so feel free to agree or disagree as you like.

Obviously, there are lots of web page addresses in the book, like this one: www.google.com. When you see one of these addresses (also known as a URL), you can go to that web page by entering the URL into the address box in your web browser. I've made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the Web addresses presented here, but given the ever-changing nature of the Web, don't be surprised if you run across an address or two that's changed. I apologize in advance.

The other thing you'll find in various places throughout this book is HTML code. A snippet of code might look like this:

```
<p>  
This is a line of text.  
</p>  

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When part of the code is italics (such as the *URL* in the previous example), this means that you need to replace the italicized code with your own individual information. In the previous example, you would replace *URL* with the full URL and filename of an image file you want to include in your auction template.

If you're a web page developer, you'll know what to do with this code. If you're not, you might want to skip over those sections. (You don't have to be a developer to use Google, of course.)

There's More Online...

I urge you to move outside the Google universe from time to time and visit my personal website, located at www.molehillgroup.com. Here you'll find more information on this book and other books I've written—including an errata page for this book, in the inevitable event that an error or two creeps into this text. (Hey, nobody's perfect!)

While you're on the Web, check out Googlepedia: The Blog (googlepedia.blogspot.com). This is my own blog devoted to the topic of Google and *Googlepedia*. I post about the latest developments in the Googleverse, as well as updates to this book. Visit it regularly.

And if you have any questions or comments, feel free to email me directly at googlepedia@molehillgroup.com. I can't guarantee that I'll respond to every email, but I will guarantee I'll read them all.

Get Ready to Google!

With all these preliminaries out of the way, it's now time to get started. While I recommend reading the book in consecutive order, that isn't completely necessary, as each part of Google exists independently of the other parts; just as it's okay to skip around through Google's various products and services, it's also okay to skip around through the various chapters in this book.

So get ready to turn the page and learn more about using the Google family of sites. I know you'll discover features you haven't noticed before, and hopefully become a more effective searcher.