

Using Google News and Alerts To Follow Topics

Google News and Google Alerts are two useful tools for tracking information about a specific subject. While it might seem like these are only useful for current issues, they can actually be applied in many different ways and have no specific chronological limitations.

At <http://news.google.com>, one can get an overview of the world's news, drawn from numerous sources. You can easily see what issues are trending in importance in regional, national, and international news. The best part of Google News, however, is customizing results to match your interests.

The Google News page consists of three columns. The right-hand column shows recent news, local news and weather (click "Edit" next to the location name if Google's guess isn't quite correct), and assorted other items. The left-hand column shows the various news categories you have selected; you can click on any of them to see what's current in those areas. The center column first shows the up-to-the-minute top stories, then the "News for you" section. If you haven't customized the page before, you'll see a "Set up progress" indicator here. You'll be asked how often you read news from various broad subjects, such as "Business" or "Science," and you can change the order in which they appear on the page. Use the "Add any news topic" space to type in very specific search terms. For example, you might type "enterprise, aircraft carrier." Be sure to put a comma between each word or phrase. By adding "aircraft carrier," you are ensuring that you will not see stories about the rental car company. Then click "Add," then "Done." When you refresh the page (tap the F5 key), you'll see your search terms in the left-hand column. Click on it, and you'll see results containing those phrases. When new articles appear that match your search

terms, they'll appear on your Google News page. Be sure to select "Sections," rather than "Lists," to group your news by subject and in the order you've selected. Also, you can change your selections at any time by clicking on "Edit personalization."

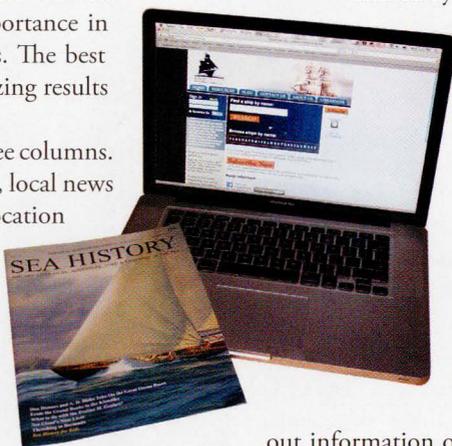
Above the Recent News on the right, select "Add a section" to find other content. You can search for sections and find ones created by other individuals, then add those to your page.

Through the "Settings" link in the top right corner, you can further customize the site, though you first need to be logged into your (free) Google account. Choose "News settings," and you can indicate which news sources you would like to see more—or less—often.

If you prefer to have your news delivered directly to your email account, use Google Alerts, at <http://alerts.google.com/>. Type in a term, select your preferred delivery options, click "Create Alert," and Google will send you regular emails showing what it has found.

Google Alerts is a great tool for seeking out information on obscure topics. (Many people create Google Alerts for their own name; you may be amazed to see how many others share your name—and what they're doing with it.) You can easily have several dozen different Alerts set up and expect that perhaps only a few will find something on each given day. To receive updates about USS *Enterprise*, you could create an Alert that reads "uss enterprise, -starship". The minus-sign in front of "starship" tells Google that you don't want to see results that include the word "starship," thereby not returning news items about *Star Trek* movies and television shows.

Suggestions for other sites worth mentioning are welcome at peter@shipindex.org. See <http://www.shipindex.org> for a free compilation of over 140,000 ship names from indexes to dozens of books and journals. ⚓





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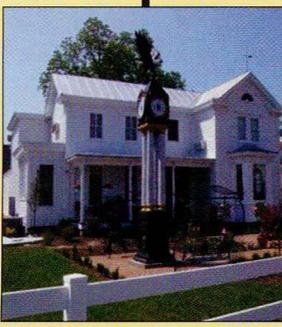
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