

Annotate the following article:

- highlight main ideas
- underline key data (names of organizations)
- circle and define challenging vocabulary (minimum 4)
- write personal responses in margins (minimum 4)
- write a thesis response to the prompt at the end (Remember to mirror back the question and use 3 points of support to back up your statement).

Are Internet Filter Bubbles Busting Your Search Results?

by Scott de Fassel; 2014; blitzmediadesign.com



Don't you love it when you find exactly what you were searching for—when the results are so personalized, it's as if Google has been hanging out in your brain waiting for you to ask the question: What's the closest Thai restaurant? Who's the best plumber? Where can I find a web designer that will boost my search engine ranking. (Sorry, couldn't resist...)

The results you receive are close to home, and just the answer to your problems. How did Google, and others like Facebook, get so smart? Filter bubbles.

Every time you search for something on the Internet or "like" something on a social media, the Internet collects these searches and likes and compiles a "track record" of your activity. Using this information, Google, Facebook (and others) use specific filters to deliver information to you every time you search or spend time on social media.

That track record, so to speak, is the bubble. It's all based on your Internet use history, which allows search engines and social media to filter the vast amount of information available online and deliver relevant results that will appeal to you.



Think about it: Google, Facebook and other sites track your interests. All of your searches and likes are compiled into your filter bubble: a conglomeration of your Internet history that helps these sites produce results that are highly personal. So, it's no coincidence that the ad on your Facebook news feed is for the same product you searched for on eBay last week. And, ever wonder why you never see a status update from

that old high school acquaintance? Well, when is the last time you Liked her status? Filter bubbles help you see the stories you enjoy so you'll keep coming back.

Now, let's dig a little deeper and address how these filter bubbles work.

The Bubble: Filters at Work

So, what are filters and where exactly is the "bubble?" Language and location are the two most basic filters Google and other sites use to deliver personalized results. If you are searching Google for an electrician and you speak English and live in Ohio, Google knows there's no need to show you the link to a bilingual electrician in Texas.

There are many other factors that Google and others use to personalize results to you. All of these filters create a bubble around you. The information that filters deem important to you goes into the bubble; the rest stays outside of the bubble and does not show up in search results.

A simple way to think of different filter bubbles is to imagine President Obama and Donald Trump Googling the same thing. Because they are different people they will have searched for different things in the past, which Google tracks and uses to filter the results of their current search. What we're saying is, no two people will get the same search results, even if they search for the same thing.

Bursting Your Bubble: The Down Side to Super Filters

The negative of personalization and filter bubbles is that you will only see information that you like. Google is not going to challenge or disagree with you. (Its search results and what flows into your "bubble" are all based on algorithms.) It's important to know, you're only seeing one side of the story: Your side. When we are only surrounded by information and people we agree with, we miss opportunities to learn and grow.

As a student and a future professional, a filter bubble can actually impact your success. How can you thoroughly research and write about a topic if there is important information or alternative points of view that are being filtered out of your search results?



You can't. So, how can you "pop" that bubble?

Clear your browsing history often. This will clean the slate, and force search engines to bring you a wider array of results. See instructions for: [Firefox](#) | [Chrome](#) | [Internet Explorer](#)

Try searching incognito. Try DuckDuckGo, a search engine that does not track your search history. Or, in your browser, turn on "incognito" or "private" mode when you need to research a topic. See instructions for: [Firefox](#) | [Chrome](#) | [Internet Explorer](#)

Search more deliberately. Get some background information to be sure you're familiar with the major aspects of your topic -- including any alternate or opposing points of view. Then, search Google, etc. with keywords that specifically target as many of those ideas and points of view as possible.

Know what a trustworthy website looks like. There are clues that will help you avoid biased or inaccurate pages on the open web. [Click here](#) to see them.

Double check your sources. If you find that perfect quote or statistic from a web page, make sure you can trace the information to its original source, or at least find another source that corroborates it. Even better if your original and/or corroborating sources are scholarly!

Use the library's databases (aka the "deep web"). This is a big time-saver! Library databases do not pre-filter your results based on your search history, though they do let you choose how to limit your results (e.g. by publication type, date, scholarly vs. popular, etc.). Good keyword choice will still be important, though.

PROMPT: In Scott de Fassel's article, "Are Internet Filter Bubbles Busting Your Search Results?" the author explains what a Filter Bubble is. Explain why filter bubbles exist and what impact they might have on an internet user's viewpoint. (THIS IS JUST A THESIS, NO HOOK OR QUOTES FROM TEXT NECESSARY, BUT DO REMEMBER TO MIRROR THE PROMPT AND MENTION 3 SUPPORTS).
