Google is suggesting searches based on users' recent activity

Google is now surfacing suggested search queries based on recent activity. The suggestion appears as a link below the search bar with the modifying term bolded and italicized, as seen below.

Google's new search suggestion feature based on recent user activity.

The personalized suggestions, first reported on by Android Police, can be quite nuanced.

How it works. Prior to searching for "noise cancelling headphones," I conducted a search for "google home." Based on that history, Google then suggested a query that essentially blends the two queries with a common thread of the Assistant.

Here's what this scenario looked like:

Query 1: "google home" > Query 2: "noise cancelling headphones" > Google's suggested query: "noise cancelling headphones with google assistant"

Clicking on the suggestion takes the user to the search results for that query.

It appears users must be logged into their Google accounts to receive these search suggestions. I reproduced this series of searches (and several more discussed below) in a single session while logged in. When I logged out of my Google account, browsing in incognito mode on Chrome, I saw no

suggestions.

Suggestions for various search intents. These search suggestions also appear to trigger outside of the e-commerce context. Below are a few examples.

The suggestion for “google search engine” was presumably influenced by the search for “search engine news” that I conducted right before.

Just prior to searching for “disney,” I conducted a search for “streaming services.” Google suggested “disney streaming.”

Some suggestions are more useful than others. Before searching for “post office,” I searched for “boston,” but instead of suggesting “post office boston” or something similar, Google suggested “post office restaurant” (there are a few dining establishments with “post office” in their names within driving distance of my location).

Why we care. Personalized search suggestions can help users find what they’re looking for, and in some cases, even influence behavior by exposing them to options that they might not have otherwise considered.

Similar features, such as “related searches” and the “people also ask” box have been around for some time, but the placement of these new search suggestions up top makes it more prominent and seems to signal that Google either considers it

to be a better suggestion or is testing user engagement.

It is unclear exactly what, if any, “recent activities” Google uses to generate these suggestions beyond search history. We reached out to Google for comment and will update here if we learn more.

Last year, Google began surfacing personalized recommendations on the home page of the Google Shopping hub based on users’ shopping and search histories.

About The Author

George Nguyen is an Associate Editor at Third Door Media. His background is in content marketing, journalism, and storytelling.
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