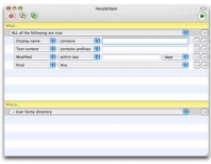


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## [HoudahSpot, Great Searching](#)

*Perfect for the fuzz...*

Spotlight is one of those improvements that are either fantastic or utterly pointless. It all depends on what you use your computer for and how organized you are. Personally, I never use Spotlight, simply because if I know what I am looking for, I already know where it is. However, if I don't know what I am looking for, spotlight will never be able to help me find it. The Finder's search capabilities are much better at dealing with fuzzy searches, since you can use criteria such as 'created within the last three days' without having to make use of any text. The issue with the Finder search is that you can only make positive searches for results that match the criteria. You cannot for example search for all files created within the past three days that are not images, because you cannot add exclusion criteria. Fortunately, there is third party software that makes use of the core search capabilities within OS X, but uses them better than Spotlight or Finder, such as HoudahSpot. **What it does**HoudahSpot is a search application that uses the same technology as Spotlight and Finder, but does a better job. It brings improvements such as Boolean operators, fuzzy searching as well as live searches and templates. Last but not least, it has a very nice interface that lets you better interact with the search results.**Working with it**HoudahSpot works much the way the Finder search does. To locate something, you have to add some search criteria. This is accomplished in the same way that the Finder does it, with the one significant distinction that you can add three types of criteria based on Boolean operators. In plain English, it lets you search for files that match 'all' of the criteria, files that match 'any' of the criteria and files that match 'none' of the criteria. It lets you mix these Boolean functions as you see fit, so you can construct incredibly complex and precise searches. When it comes to criteria, there is plenty to choose from, with a list so long that finding something in it becomes a pain, but this is not a surprise because there are the same criteria that the Finder itself works with. Once you have the criteria and the location you want to search set up, you can start letting it do its thing and find the files that match. Searches, once started are live, meaning that HoudahSpot will never stop looking for files that match, even after it has gone through the entire contents of your computer. Instead, it will patiently sit there, and monitor files and folders that are changed in case they match the query, at which point it adds them to the list. Once a search is live, the criteria for it can no longer be modified, so you have to stop it in order to make any changes. The results list is another great thing about HoudahSpot. You can filter the results using a standard search, you can preview the files directly from the window, including text files, PDFs, images, music and videos. You can see detailed information about any of the files, and, last but not least, you can browse the folder that houses the file. This is invaluable since you can directly go in and see what other files are in the same location and if any of them are interesting. **Save some for later**Another great thing about HoudahSpot is how it can save queries. Each and every query you create can be saved as a simple file. This is good because once you create complex queries for tracking down certain files, you can keep them for later when they might be needed again. Searches can be saved either in their regular, 'inactive' state, or when they are 'live.' Live searches function much the same way as smart folders, while inactive ones are good in themselves or as a template for other searches. Templates can be easily accessed from the templates menu within the application and they can contain any query you can imagine. They are exactly identical to any other query documents, with the exception that they are housed within a certain folder for the application to find. **Easy access**HoudahSpot creates a menu bar item that lets you quickly bring the application's window to the front or start a new query. You can also do this via universal keyboard shortcuts. Furthermore, the menu bar

item offers instant access to templates for quick searches. The templates can also be accessed via keyboard shortcuts that are defined in the preferences. Overall, these menus and keyboard shortcuts make the application very easily accessible and help make searches faster. **The Good** Much better use of criteria due to Boolean variables. Also has a superior handling of the results. Ideal for fuzzy searches. **The Bad** Lacks a 'basic search' option to mimic Spotlight's behaviors so you can use it exclusively. **The Truth** When you need to make complex searches, HoudahSpot is miles ahead of the Finder. Might take a little longer to set up, but it excels at finding files that you know little or nothing about. Here are some screenshots, click to enlarge: