

FOCUS:

Choosing the Right Search

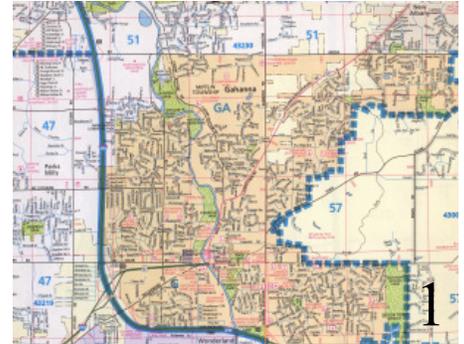
Class Handout

FOCUS - Choosing the Right Search

The FOCUS - Choosing the Right Search class is designed to provide a starting point for creating viable and efficient MLS database searches. The class will help students translate “client-speak”, that is, the words that the buyer says in describing where they want to live and what type of home they want to purchase.

1) Listening to the Client’s Description

- a) Pick a location that is quiet,
 - i) Noise and distractions lead to missed/misunderstood criteria
 - ii) Have tools ready: Pen, paper, speakerphone, etc
- b) Write it all down
 - i) Take good notes so you can make sure you
 - ii) Ask lots of questions



Is this the “Gahanna Area”?

- c) Clarify ambiguities
 - i) EXAMPLE 1: Does “Gahanna area” = corp limit or vicinity? When a client says they want to live in Gahanna, do they mean Gahanna Corporate limits? Do they mean any mailing address that lists Gahanna as the city? Do they mean the general vicinity of Gahanna, which may actually be a Columbus or New Albany mailing address? Knowing EXACTLY what your client wants is the key. If they say “Gahanna area” it is very uncertain whether they mean vicinity, mailing address, or the Gahanna corporate limits only. You may need to explain the difference to them.
 - ii) EXAMPLE 2: City Services or vicinity of that city? Imagine a client says, “I want Olentangy Schools, but I don’t want Powell taxes.” If you use Corp Limits of Powell, that is Powell taxes, police and fire. If you create a large polygon, or use City field with “Powell”, you’ll get properties that pay either Powell Corp. or unincorporated Liberty Township Taxes. If you use a “is not” operator on either the Corp Limit OR Tax District field, you could exclude only Powell corp limits within a polygon or any other (School District) criteria.



- d) Explain pitfalls of too much criteria
 - i) EXAMPLE 3: Too much criteria will lead to zero matching listings. If you enter the following criteria, you will get a very small number, if any, listings: List price \$210-230K, minimum 3 beds, minimum 2 baths, Franklin county, Worthington Schools, Worthington city only, Municipality of Worthington, 2 car parking, and a .5 mile radius of the intersection of Rt. 161 and Rt. 23. It would be better to start with basics, then add criteria until there is a comfortable amount of matches.



2) Translating “client-speak” into a viable, accurate search

- a) Start with basic criteria
 - i) Beds, Baths, Price are generally good starting point
 - ii) Don’t jump directly to Polygon, Zip, etc.

iii) No assumptions, if not sure, clarify (See Above)

iv) be careful not to specify too much criteria = zero results (See Above)

b) Decide best way to search

i) Each search has multiple possibilities

aa) Polygon, schools, tax district, zip, etc

ii) Don't be TOO precise - Any variable will change total results

aa) If the client has a price range of \$230-250K, remind them that a list price of \$251K will not be found by that search. While that could likely be negotiated down into the client's price range, it will never be returned because the criteria was not met. This same rule applies to map searches (polygons). If the house is on the opposite side of the street, but your polygon runs down the middle of the street, that property has been excluded. It is always advised to put some "padding" around the edges of your search. (EXAMPLE 4) Whether price, polygon, or any other field, go a little outside the criteria just so you don't miss any that are right at the "edge" of your criteria.

bb) Don't need begin and end range always. If client wants at least 4 bedrooms, you can simply enter 4 in the begin range. If you enter 4 in begin and end range, any 3 or 5 bedroom houses are excluded. Your client may want a 5 bedroom in this price range, but nothing "less than" 4.

cc) requiring all fields will limit total listings (See Above)



iii) Fastest way isn't always the best way

aa) "Blind Searches" like area, zip, Corp limit.

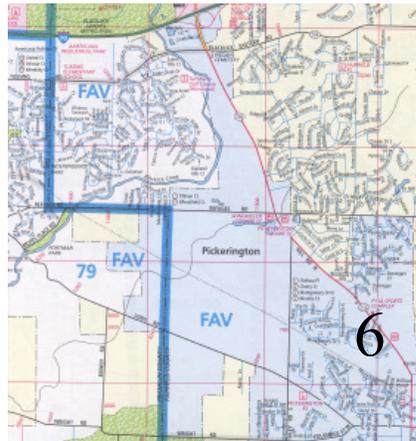
iv) If there is a field for it, usually best to use that field

aa) EXAMPLE 5: School District, Zip Code, City. If your client wants a specific school, but doesn't care about exact location, just add price and other criteria to School District. No other geogaphy is necessary if that is the client's only requirement.

A screenshot of a search form. The form has several fields: "Subd/Cmplx/Commun*" (empty), "School District*" (set to "DUBLIN" with a dropdown arrow and "Options»" link), "County*" (empty), "MLS Number" (empty), "List Price*" (set to "300,000" and "and" followed by an empty field with ",000" and a red pencil icon), "Bedrooms" (set to "4" and "and" followed by an empty field), and "Full Baths" (empty). A large number "5" is overlaid on the form.

bb) Polygon not always necessary to get exact results

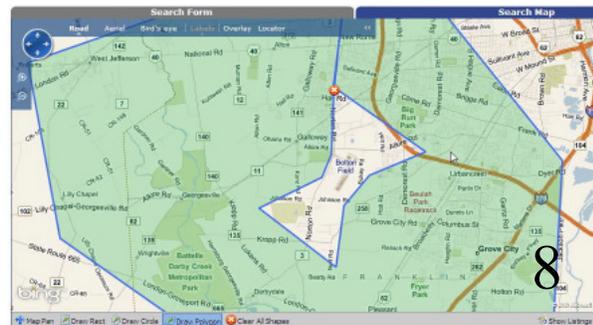
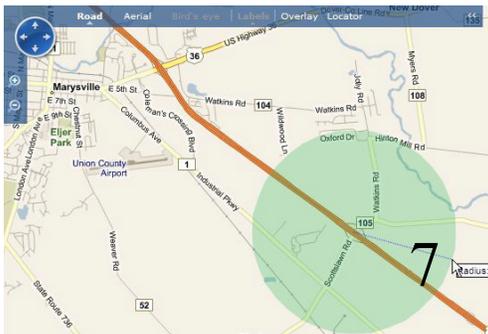
cc) EXAMPLE 6: Corp Limit field is same geography as County/Tax District. This assumes the agent entered the correct tax district and parcel information when entering the listing. Remember that many cities, like Pickerington and Dublin, have multiple tax districts and even multiple counties that are included in their corporate limits.



v) Polygons - When Map Search is best

aa) clearly defined boundaries - between this street and that one

bb) EXAMPLE 7: distance from target point - radius .5 miles from exit ramp, workplace, parents home, etc. If a client who works in Marysville want to live within 1 mile of the Scottslawn/US 33 exit, create a radius polygon to quickly get that exact distance from a target point. Remember to add “padding” as discussed in the “TOO precise” discussion above.

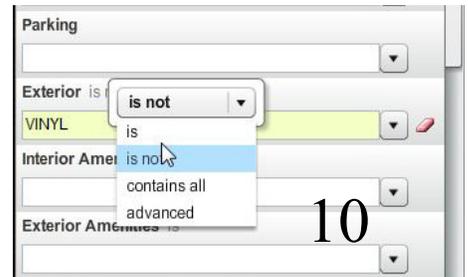


cc) EXAMPLE 8: Exclude an area inside a larger area using a “Donut Search” If a client says, “I want Southwest Columbus, but I don’t want to live too close to Bolton Field, especially in the flight path.” Create a “Donut Polygon” around Bolton Field, carefully making sure the client’s “unwanted location” is not highlighted in Green when you are done.



dd) EXAMPLE 9: Large general boundary combined with other criteria. If you find yourself doing a lot of searches North of I-270, create a saved polygon that covers all of the north side outside 270. You can always add specific criteria like School, city, zip, etc to filter the large number of listings that a huge polygon will find.

- c) Entering criteria
 - i) Double check for spelling, correct number of digits
 - ii) Check Current Criteria window when you get odd results



- d) Using operators correctly
 - i) including or excluding data with operators
 - aa) EXAMPLE 10: When to use “is” vs. “is not”. If the client says, “I don’t want any vinyl siding. Brick is fine, as is aluminum, etc. No Vinyl.” That’s a great time to use the “is not” operator.
 - ii) Starts with is best for subdivision
 - iii) Contains is best for Property Description, Additional Remarks, A2A Remarks, etc.

e) Dangers of user-entered incorrect data

- i) MLS database will return only data as entered by Agent
- ii) Misspellings will cause incorrect/missed results
 - aa) Good reason to abbreviate search term
 - bb) Subdivision is very susceptible to errors
 - cc) All remarks fields contain many abbreviations, misspellings, etc

iii) Good Policy to always “get a second opinion” . If you searched by Corp Limit, run the search again using tax district. Run it again with polygon. There may be a small difference, especially with a polygon since you may have drawn it a little to large or small. If you get a huge difference, check your criteria and make sure you didn’t make a mistake.

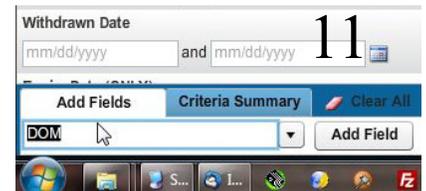
f) Special Consideration Fields

- i) City is Mailing address
- ii) Township unreliable in metro areas like Columbus
- iii) All Remarks fields are risky (spelling, abbrev)
- iv) Subdiv/Compl/Comm - Often left blank, also abbreviated/misspelled
- v) Parking - 2 car, attached, opener...did the listing agent mark them?
- vi) Rooms, Amenities, etc - optional entry fields

vii) Corp Limit is policing, taxing authority. verify on auditor site.

g) Additional search fields for special searches

- i) A2A Remarks
- ii) Additional Remarks
- iii) EXAMPLE 11: Total Baths and Integer Baths - These fields can be used to find more than a certain number of total baths, or Integer Baths can be used WITH Full and Half baths to find exactly what the client asks for. If the client says, “I want at least 4 baths, with at least 2 full baths.” This can be accomplished by putting a “4” in Integer Baths (simply put, integer means each bath is a whole number “1” regardless of 1/2 or full). Integer baths 4 and Full baths min. 2 will return only properties with at least 4 baths of any kind and must be 2 full baths, the other 2 can be 1/2 or full. You must add “Integer Baths” from the additional fields on the bottom left corner of the search window.
- iv) DOM - must be added from Additional (Add) fields.
- v) All searchable fields can be added per category from Additional (Add)Fields.



END