

verot.net - How to reset Google languages from Firefox search, manipulating the URL

[google_language.htm](#)

The problem

I am English speaking, and prefer my Google search results to be from [google.com](#) rather than [google.fr](#) when from France. But each time I use the Firefox search box, from a French IP, Google redirects to the French site, and I mostly end up with French results, when I would prefer english results.

Here is what the search URL looks like when searching from Firefox:

```
http://www.google.fr/search?q=linux
&ie=utf-8
&oe=utf-8
&aq=t
&rsls=com.ubuntu:en-US:official
&client=firefox-a
```

This leads to [French results](#), in this case the first one being the Wikipedia French page for Linux.

How to get English results?

Two parameters are related to languages: *hl* and *lr*. According to this [Google page](#) and this [PDF document](#), *hl* controls the language for the interface of the Google page, and *lr* restricts the results to one or more languages.

So if I add *hl=en* in the query string, I get the english interface, as well as English results:

```
http://www.google.fr/search?q=linux
&ie=utf-8
&oe=utf-8
&aq=t
&rsls=com.ubuntu:en-US:official
&client=firefox-a
&hl=en
```

I then get [this results page](#), the first result being the linux.org site, in English.

Similarly, if I add *lr=lang_en* in the query string, I get the english results, but with the interface in local language:

```
http://www.google.fr/search?q=linux
&ie=utf-8
&oe=utf-8
&aq=t
&rsls=com.ubuntu:en-US:official
```

```
&client=firefox-a
&lr=lang_en
```

I get [this results page](#), the first result being the linux.org site, in English.

Weirdly enough. the results are almost the same with either parameters. Your mileage may vary.

Note that you can use *hl* and *lr* together, so to have have English results with a French interface, or French results with an English interface. Here are a few tests which show the effect of each of the language settings, and describe the results that you get from google.fr:

- [hl=en](#): Results and interface in English, same as google.com
- [lr=lang_en](#): Results in English, and interface in French
- [hl=fr](#): Results and interface in French
- [lr=lang_fr](#): Results and interface in French, same as above
- [lr=lang_fr&hl=en](#): Results in French, and interface in English
- [lr=lang_en&hl=fr](#): Results in English, and interface in French

How to do it?

The goal is to change Firefox default query string for Google searches.

According to [Mozilla wiki](#), the query string is created as following:

```
q=MY+IMPORTANT+SEARCH : Search term
ie=utf-8 : Input encoding
oe=utf-8 : Output encoding
client=firefox-a : Used when Google ships as the default search engine
client=firefox : Used when Google ships as the non-default search engine
rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official : Will vary based on locale
aq=t : Identifies the query as coming from a suggest-enabled searchbox
```

You can change these parameters, although it is rather hidden into Firefox. Under Linux, open the following file `/usr/share/firefox/searchplugins/google.xml` (it may also be `/usr/lib/firefox-addons/searchplugins/google.xml`, `/usr/lib64/firefox-x.x.x/searchplugins/google.xml`). In newer versions of Firefox, the xml file may be in a language subdirectory, for instance `/usr/share/firefox/searchplugins/en-US/google.xml`

```
<Url type="text/html" method="GET" template="http://www.google.com/search">
  <Param name="q" value="{searchTerms}"/>
  <Param name="ie" value="utf-8"/>
  <Param name="oe" value="utf-8"/>
  <Param name="aq" value="t"/>
  <!-- Dynamic parameters -->
  <Param name="rls" value="{moz:distributionID}:{moz:locale}:{moz:official}"/>
  <MozParam name="client" condition="defaultEngine" trueValue="firefox-a"
falseValue="firefox"/>
</Url>
```

Simply add the following line in the list of parameters:

```
<Param name="hl" value="en"/>
```

Or if you prefer to use *lr*:

```
<Param name="lr" value="lang_en" />
```

I prefer to use *hl*, which yields best results as far as I am concerned. However, *lr* has an important advantage: you can mix languages to retrieve results from pages in several languages. For instance, you can get English and German results if you set *lr* to *lang_en|lang_de*.

I guess you can also remove the parameters *client*, *rls* and *aq*, but I wouldn't recommend it. Some people say that the [results change when the search is performed from Firefox search box](#), but keep in mind that the [Mozilla Foundation receives some money from Google](#) depending on the searches made from inside the Firefox search box. So...

Making it stick

Each time you'll update Firefox, you will have to re-apply your changes to the XML file. So it is generally easier to just duplicate the *google.xml* file as for instance *google_en.xml*. In the new XML file, add the *hl* parameter, and change the name of the search engine. Then, in Firefox, select your new search engine. Being a custom search engine, it will not be erased by an update of Firefox. Here below is my *google_en.xml*:

```
<SearchPlugin xmlns="http://www.mozilla.org/2006/browser/search/">
<ShortName>Google EN</ShortName>
<Description>Google Search English</Description>
<InputEncoding>UTF-8</InputEncoding>
<Image width="16"
```


height="16">
<Url type="application/x-suggestions+json" method="GET"

```

template="http://suggestqueries.google.com/complete/search?output=firefox&client=firefox-a"
<Url type="text/html" method="GET" template="http://www.google.com/search">
  <Param name="q" value="{searchTerms}" />
  <Param name="ie" value="utf-8" />
  <Param name="oe" value="utf-8" />
  <Param name="aq" value="t" />
  <Param name="hl" value="en" />
  <!-- Dynamic parameters -->
  <Param name="rls" value="{moz:distributionID}:{moz:locale}:{moz:official}" />
  <MozParam name="client" condition="defaultEngine" trueValue="firefox-a"
falseValue="firefox" />
</Url>
<SearchForm>http://www.google.com/firefox</SearchForm>
</SearchPlugin>

```

Anything else?

Michael sent me a few more tips.

You can use search plugins to add a word that you search for frequently together with other words. You can for instance use it to find sites about local stuff by adding *+London*.

```
<Param name="q" value="{searchTerms} +London" />
```

You can use the setting *as_qdr* to search for recent pages. For instance, to get results from the past month only, add:

```
<Param name="as_qdr" value="1m" />
```

You'll save yourself a lot of time by adding the following, to give you 40 hits per pages:

```
<Param name="num" value="40" />
```

If you're savvy about using tabs, you can get every search result to open in a new tab (I prefer the [Tab Mix Plus extension](#)):

```
<Param name="newwindow" value="1" />
```

You can exclude an TLD (or only include it) using `as_dt` and `as_sitesearch` together. To exclude .info TLD, add:

```
<Param name="as_dt" value="e" />
<Param name="as_sitesearch" value="info" />
```

To include only .info TLD, add:

```
<Param name="as_dt" value="i" />
<Param name="as_sitesearch" value="info" />
```

With add-ons

Two Firefox add-ons can also force the language for Google results:

- [Google.com in English - always '.com'](#)
- [Google.com - always '.com' \(English suggestions\)](#) which is the same as above, but with support for Google Suggest. It is however experimental.

If you have any comments or other tips, [email me!](#)