This guide is intended to help you get started with basic legal research using the LexisNexis® Academic database through the Mervyn H. Sterne Library. LexisNexis Academic includes:

- State, federal, and international case law
- Federal and state codes, statutes, and regulations
- Law reviews and legal periodicals
- Patent and tax materials

Each section of this guide includes instructions and screen captures to guide you through the research process.

**ACCESSING THE DATABASE**

- Click the Databases icon on the library's home page.
- Click the “Law” link.

- Click the “LexisNexis Legal” link to enter the database.
There are multiple ways to search for case law using LexisNexis® Academic. Cases are considered primary sources in legal research. Cases are the published opinions issued by trial and appellate courts. Most published cases come from federal and state appellate courts. These courts include state courts of appeal, federal circuit courts, and the United States Supreme Court. You can search by case citation, case name, or just a normal full-text search.

**SEARCHING BY CASE CITATION**

Searching by case citation is the easiest and most efficient way to locate a case. When searching by citation, you don’t need to enter the party names, court information, or date. You only need to enter the alphanumeric citation, but be sure to enter it exactly as written (including spaces and punctuation). If you get no results, check the citation to be sure it was entered correctly.

- Type your citation into the “By Citation” text box (e.g. 276 F.3d 550) and click the blue “Go” button.

- Some cases have LexisNexis specific citations. In that case, you must enter the exact full citation as shown below.
SEARCHING BY PARTY NAMES

You can also search by the name of the parties involved in the case. This type of searching is not as precise as citation searching so you may have to scroll through your results to find the case you need.

- Type the two lead parties' names into the “Parties” text box (e.g. Lee v. Katz). Use only the individuals’ last name and omit corporate designations (e.g. Inc., Corp., etc.).

SEARCHING FOR CASES ON A SPECIFIC TOPIC

You can also search for cases using the same search methods you would in most other databases. This is the best way to search if you are not looking for a specific case but rather if you want to search for cases dealing with a particular topic or that contain specific terms or phrases. To get started with your search:

- Click the “US Legal” tab on the left side of the screen.
• Click the “Federal & State Cases” link on the left side of the screen.

• Type your search term(s) into the “Search For” box.

These search tips will help you refine your search and find more relevant cases.

- Quotes: “corporal punishment” or “free speech zones” or “due process”
- Proximity searching: "corporal punishment” w/20 school
- Truncation: teacher w/10 dismiss!
- Nesting: “free speech zone” w/20 (campus OR school OR university OR college)

You can also choose where in the case you would like to search (e.g. everywhere, summary, citation, etc.) by using the pull-down menu after the search box.
• If you are looking for cases that were decided within a certain date range or from a specific court, district, circuit, or state, you can set these limits using the “Specify Date” and “Jurisdiction” menus.

SEARCHING FOR FEDERAL AND STATE CODES

Searching the United States Code and state codes is a little different than searching for case law.

SEARCHING THE UNITED STATES CODE

• Click the “US Legal” tab on the left side of the screen.
• Click the “Federal Statutes, Codes & Regulations” link

• To search for a specific code section (11 U.S.C. § 707) the search would look like this: 11 w/3 707 (Notice the use of proximity searching.)

• Select “Citation” from the pull down menu and click the red “Search” button.
To search for code sections on a specific topic (e.g. the fair use section of the Copyright Code) the search would look like this: "fair use" w/20 copyright (Notice the use of quotes and proximity searching).

Once you’ve run your search you will be shown a results list. Depending on your search the results list may be short or long. For longer results lists you may want to refine your search especially if you are searching for code sections on a particular topic. If only one section meets your search criteria, you’ll be taken directly to that section.

**SEARCHING THE CODE OF ALABAMA**

- Click the “US Legal” tab on the left side of the screen.
• Click the “State Statutes, Codes & Regulations” link

![LexisNexis Academic](https://example.com/lexisnexis Academic.png)

• To search for a specific code section (Ala. Code § 7-9A-110) the search is fairly straightforward. Just follow these steps to find the Code of Alabama section you're looking for:
  1. Type your citation in the “Search For” box (e.g. 7-9A-110)
  2. Select “Citation” from the pull down menu
  3. Select “Alabama” from the State pull down menu
  4. Click the red “Search” button to start your search

![LexisNexis Academic](https://example.com/lexisnexis Academic2.png)

• To search for code sections on a specific topic (e.g. impersonating a peace officer) the search would look like this: impersonat! w/5 officer (Notice the use of truncation and proximity searching.)
• Once you’re on the state code search screen, just follow these steps to search the Code of Alabama.
  
  o Select “Alabama” from the State pull down menu
  o Type your search term(s) in the “Search For” box (i.e. impersonat! w/5 officer)
  o Click the red “Search” button to start your search

Once you’ve run your search you will be shown a results list. Depending on your search the results list may be short or long. For longer results lists you may want to refine your search especially if you are searching for code sections on a particular topic. If only one section meets your search criteria, you’ll be taken directly to that section.

**BROWSING THE UNITED STATES CODE OR STATE CODES**

You may find that you’d like to browse the Code rather than search it. This is easy to do in LexisNexis.

• Click the “US Legal” tab on the left side of the screen.
- Click the “Federal Statutes, Codes & Regulations” link. If you want to browse state codes you can click the “State Statutes, Codes & Regulations” link.

- Click the “Browse” link after Annotated U.S. Code (USC).

- Choose the section to Browse.
FULL TEXT SEARCHING

- Click the “US Legal” tab on the left side of the screen.

- Click the “Law Reviews” link

- Type your search terms in the “Search for” box and click the red “Search” button

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