

LexisNexis Legal Research Guide

A Step-by-Step How-To for Law Students



FOUNDATION

Why Master Lexis+ Legal Research?

Find Authority

Locate statutes, case law, and judicial opinions across jurisdictions

Access Resources

Explore treatises, practice guides, and secondary sources

Validate Citations

Use Shepard's to confirm authority is still good law

Build Skills

Develop professional-level research competency for practice

Start With a Solid Research Plan



Before you dive into searching, take time to clarify your research parameters. A clear plan saves hours of unfocused searching.

Subject Matter

What is the legal issue? What facts are known?

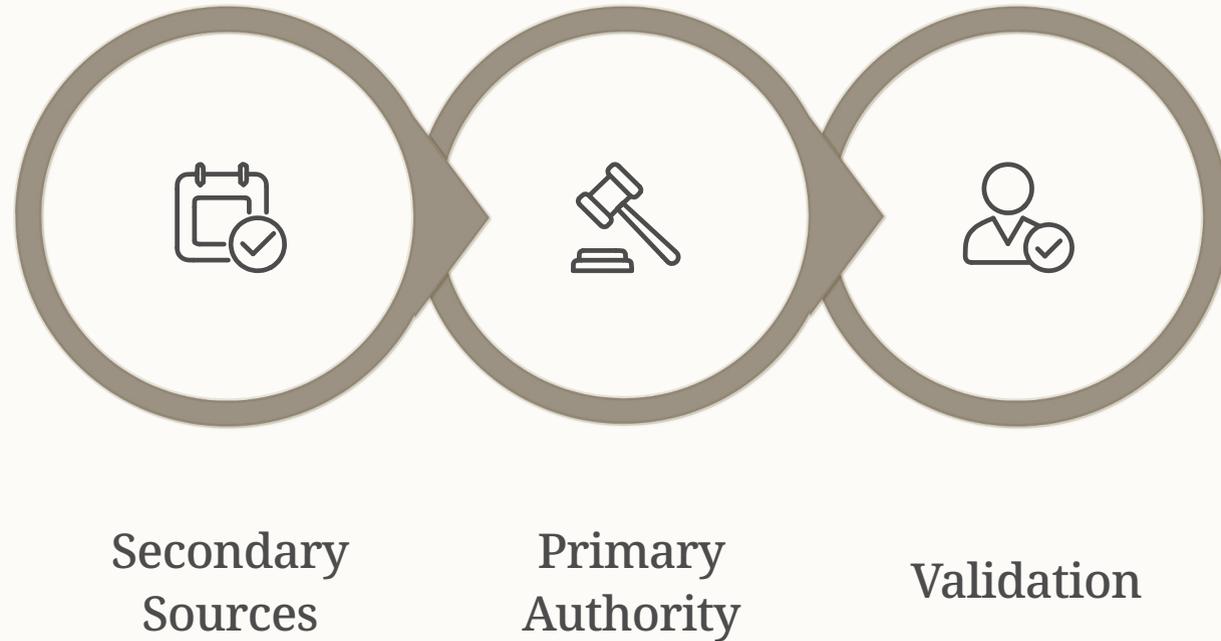
Jurisdiction

Federal or state? Which court level applies?

Scope & Deadline

How comprehensive? When is it due?

The Core Legal Research Strategy



This proven sequence works for every legal research assignment. Starting with secondary sources provides context before diving into primary law, and validation ensures you're citing good authority.



Video - Basic Research Skills on Lexis

GETTING STARTED

Logging Into Lexis+

01

Navigate to Platform

Go to **plus.lexis.com** in your browser

02

Enter Credentials

Use your law school login information

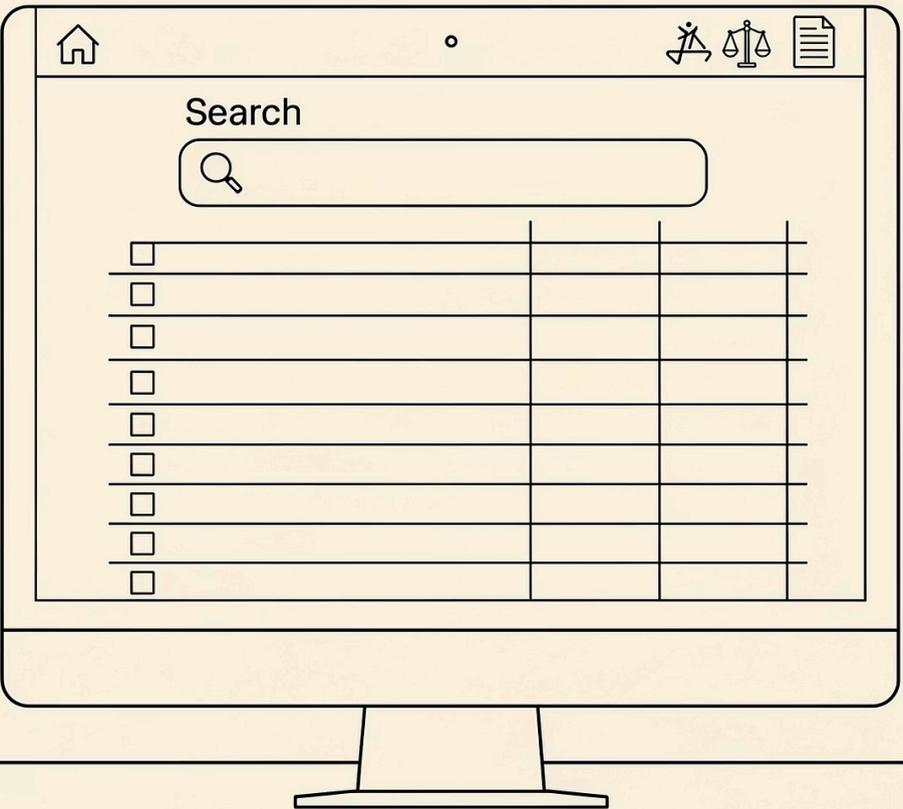
03

Access Dashboard

You'll see the main search bar and navigation menu

Quick Tip

Bookmark the Lexis+ homepage for instant access. The platform interface is intuitive and designed for quick navigation to all major research tools.



Two Powerful Search Methods

Natural Language Search

Works like Google—just type your question or topic.

- **Advantages:** Fast, simple, great starting point
- **Disadvantages:** Lots of results, less precise
- **Example:** "criminal trespass Illinois"

Results appear by category: secondary sources, cases, statutes, and more.

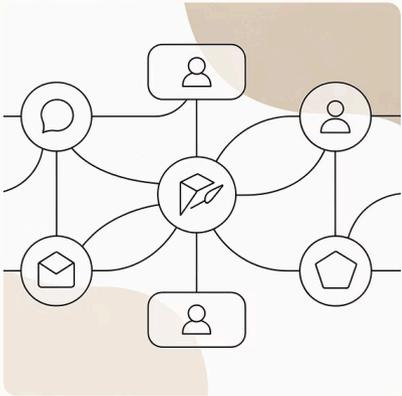
Terms & Connectors (Boolean)

Precision searching using structured operators.

- **OR** – broadens (house OR home)
- **AND** – narrows (property AND trespass)
- **/#** – proximity (property /10 trespass)

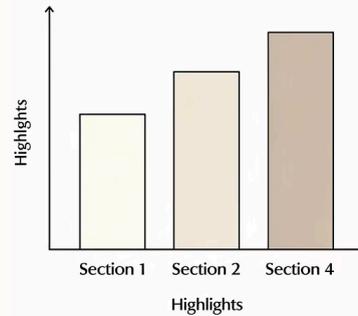
Use Advanced Search templates to build queries automatically.

Essential Search Tools



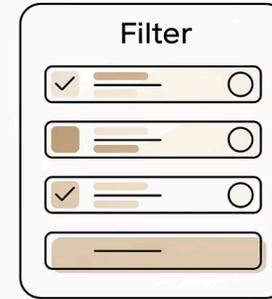
Search Tree

Visual diagram showing how Boolean connectors affected your results—refine searches quickly



Search Term Maps

Color-coded bars reveal where terms appear in documents for rapid relevance assessment



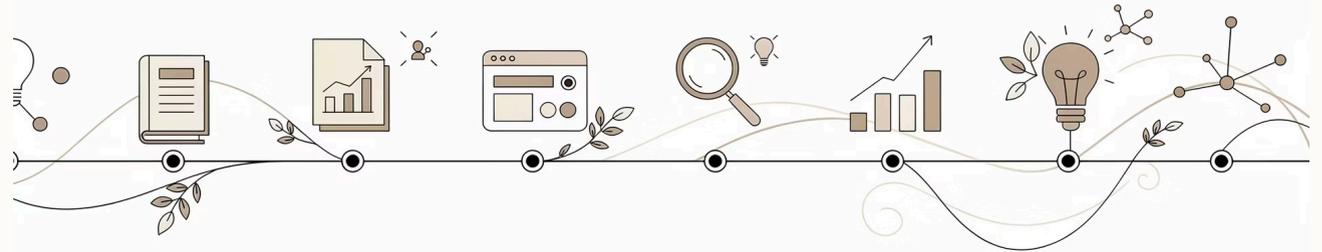
Filters Panel

Narrow by jurisdiction, content type, date range, or practice area on the left side

Tracking Your Research History

Lexis+ automatically records your activity for up to 90 days. Click **History** in the top right corner to view recent searches and access past work.

Use your history as a research checklist to ensure you've covered all necessary sources and haven't missed critical authority. It's also helpful for reconstructing your research path when writing memos or briefs.



Four Ways to Find Statutes

Get a Doc

Use when you know the citation. Click Tools → Get a Doc → enter chapter and section



Direct Citation

Type abbreviated citation directly in search bar. No punctuation needed

Browse Code

Search "Illinois statutes" → select Annotated Code → use Table of Contents



Broad Then Filter

Search topic → filter to Statutes & Legislation → select jurisdiction

Pro tip: Annotated codes include legislative history, amendments, case notes, and practice references—essential for comprehensive understanding.

Finding and Narrowing Case Law

Search by Case Name

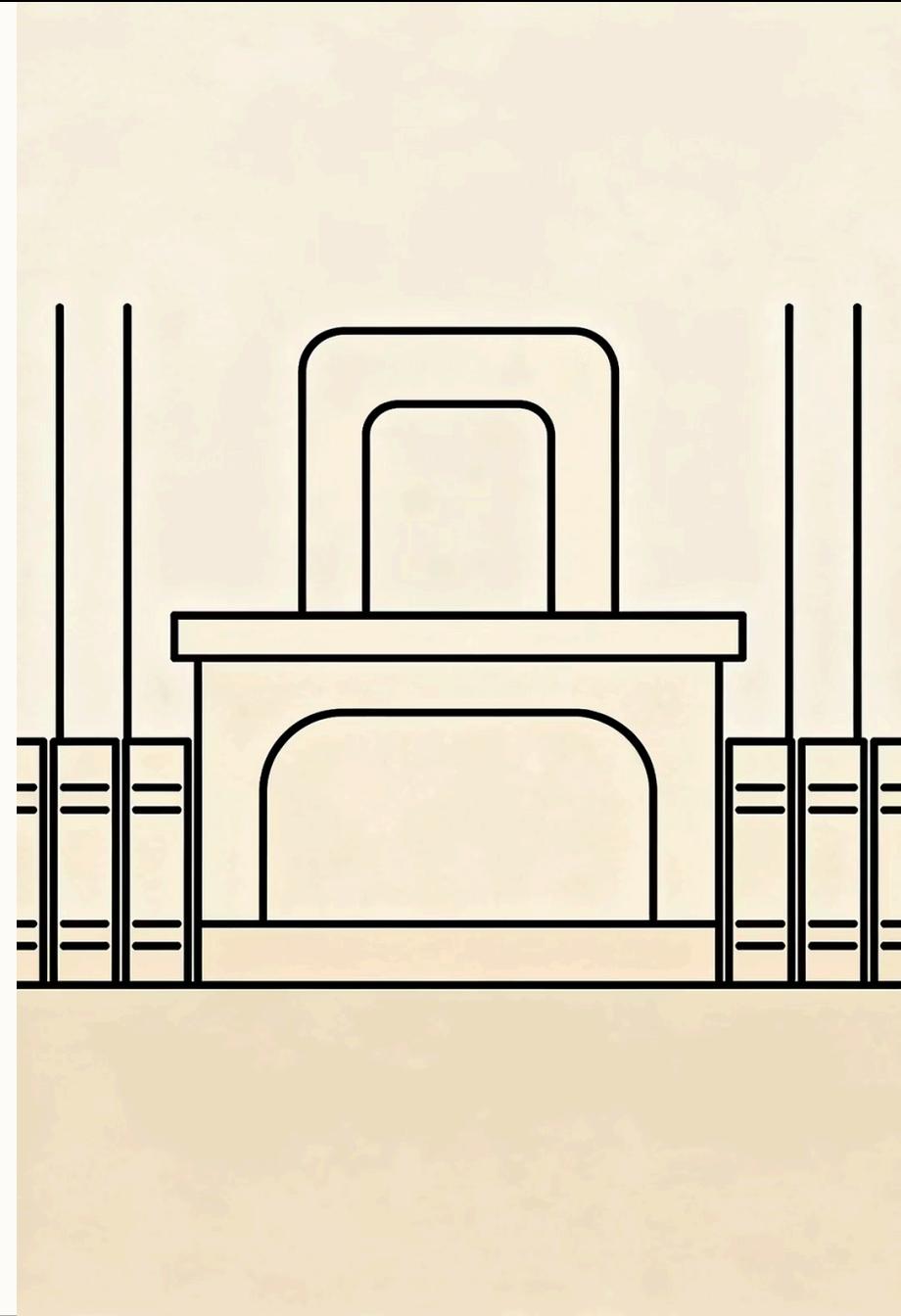
Type *Party v Party* and Lexis will suggest matches as you type.

Search by Citation

Enter volume, reporter, and page number. Example: 452 US 161

Narrow Your Results

- Filter by jurisdiction and court level
- Limit by year or date range
- Review case summaries before reading full opinions
- Use headnotes to identify relevant legal principles



Reading a Case Effectively

1

Case Summary

Quick overview of facts, issues, and holding—but never cite this section

2

Headnotes

Editor-created statements of legal principles organized by topic

3

Full Opinion

Judicial reasoning—you must read this before citing any portion

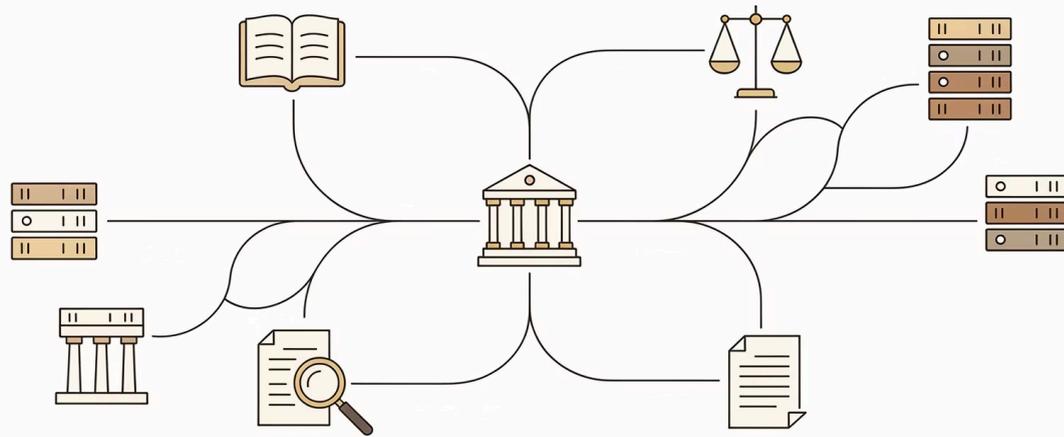
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Page References

Bracketed star numbers show page breaks for pinpoint citations

- ❏ **Copy Advanced Feature:** Highlight text and use Copy Advanced to include proper pinpoint citations automatically.

Using Headnotes to Expand Research



Headnotes are powerful research shortcuts. Each headnote represents a specific legal principle from the case.

Click any legal topic within a headnote, then select **Get Documents** to find similar cases or related authority addressing the same legal issue.

This technique helps you build comprehensive citations and discover persuasive authority you might have missed.

 CRITICAL STEP

Shepard's Citations: Validating Authority

What Shepard's Does

- Tracks the history of cases and statutes
- Shows whether authority is still good law
- Indicates treatment by later courts

Golden Rule

Always Shepardize before citing. Citing overruled authority can damage your credibility and harm your client's position.

Best Practices for Legal Research



Start Broad, Then Narrow

Begin with secondary sources and natural language, refine with Boolean and filters



Read Full Opinions

Never rely solely on summaries or headnotes when citing authority



Validate Everything

Shepardize all cases and statutes before including in your work



Save & Organize

Use folders to save important sources and track your research path



Review History

Check your research history to ensure comprehensive coverage

Final Research Checklist

Before Submitting

Use this checklist to confirm your research is complete and professional.

- ✓ Secondary sources reviewed for context
- ✓ Statutes located and expanded with annotations
- ✓ Cases identified and full opinions read
- ✓ All authority validated with Shepard's Citations
- ✓ Citations checked against Bluebook or local rules
- ✓ Research history reviewed for completeness

You're now equipped to conduct professional-level legal research using Lexis+.