How to retrieve and search for cases

There are several ways to retrieve cases and conduct case law research on Thomson Reuters Westlaw™. Learn how to quickly locate the legal authority you need below.

Retrieving a Case by Citation or Name

When you know the citation or name of the case you’d like to find, type it into the search bar at the top of any page.

- To retrieve a case by citation, type the citation, e.g., *127 sct 2162*, in the search bar and hit Enter or click Search.
- To retrieve multiple cases by citation, enter each citation in the search bar, separated by a semicolon, e.g. *113 sct 2217; 127 sct 2162*. You may enter up to 30 citations in the search bar at a time.
- To retrieve a case by party name, begin typing the party names in the search bar. Suggestions will appear in the search box dropdown. Select the title of your case under Cases.

Keyword Searching for Cases

When searching for cases, sometimes you may only have a few key words to start your research.

- Enter either a plain language search or a Boolean Terms and Connectors search in the search bar at the top of any page.
- You may filter your results to a particular jurisdiction after you run the search. Or, click the Jurisdiction box to the right of the search bar and select up to three jurisdictions before searching. Once you’ve selected your jurisdiction(s), click Save.

As you begin typing your search terms, a drop-down box will populate with WestSearch® suggestions. When applicable, documents that match your search will appear in a drop-down box below your query. If these suggestions don't match your needs, try a broader, plain language search.

- Click a link in the Cases section to jump to that document, or click Search to run your search in all legal content, including cases.
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VIEWING YOUR SEARCH RESULTS

RESULT PAGE

After you run a search, the result page is displayed. Browse the Overview page or select Cases in the left column to display the result pages for cases. By default, results are ranked by relevance and include the most on-point documents – even if they don’t reference the specific terms used in your search.

You can also sort by other categories like Date or Most Cited. For example, sort by Date to see the most recent court decisions.

RESULT PAGE OPTIONS

The results page allows you to customize your view to your research preferences.

- Click the View Detail icon (-) on the result page to select from three levels of detail. Details may include the case title and citation, search terms in context, and a case summary.
- To change the number of cases that are displayed, choose a number from the drop-down list at the bottom of the page.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

When viewing a result page, a list of related documents from secondary sources, briefs, and trial court documents is available to the right of your results. Click the arrows to the left of Related Documents to minimize and expand this column.
SEARCHING WITHIN RESULTS

You may want to search for a specific phrase or term(s) within your search results. To search within the results, enter your terms in the Search within results field in the left column and click Search.

Search within results uses Boolean Terms and Connectors rules, so when you are searching for more than one word, you will want to use quotations around the phrase, or use connectors between words. For example, abnormally dangerous activity or reasonable person. Sample searches and simple connectors are provided within the search box to help you.

Both your original search terms and the “search within results” terms are highlighted in your results.

FILTERING SEARCH RESULTS

At any time during your research, you can narrow a search result by selecting a filter in the left column. To undo the filters you have added, click Clear. You can also restore previous filters by clicking the Restore previous filters button. You can filter by case title, results you’ve previously viewed, saved, annotated, and more. Filter options vary depending on the content type you are viewing and are designed to help you find on-point results quickly, so you can get the answers you need faster.