

**USC Gould**

School of Law

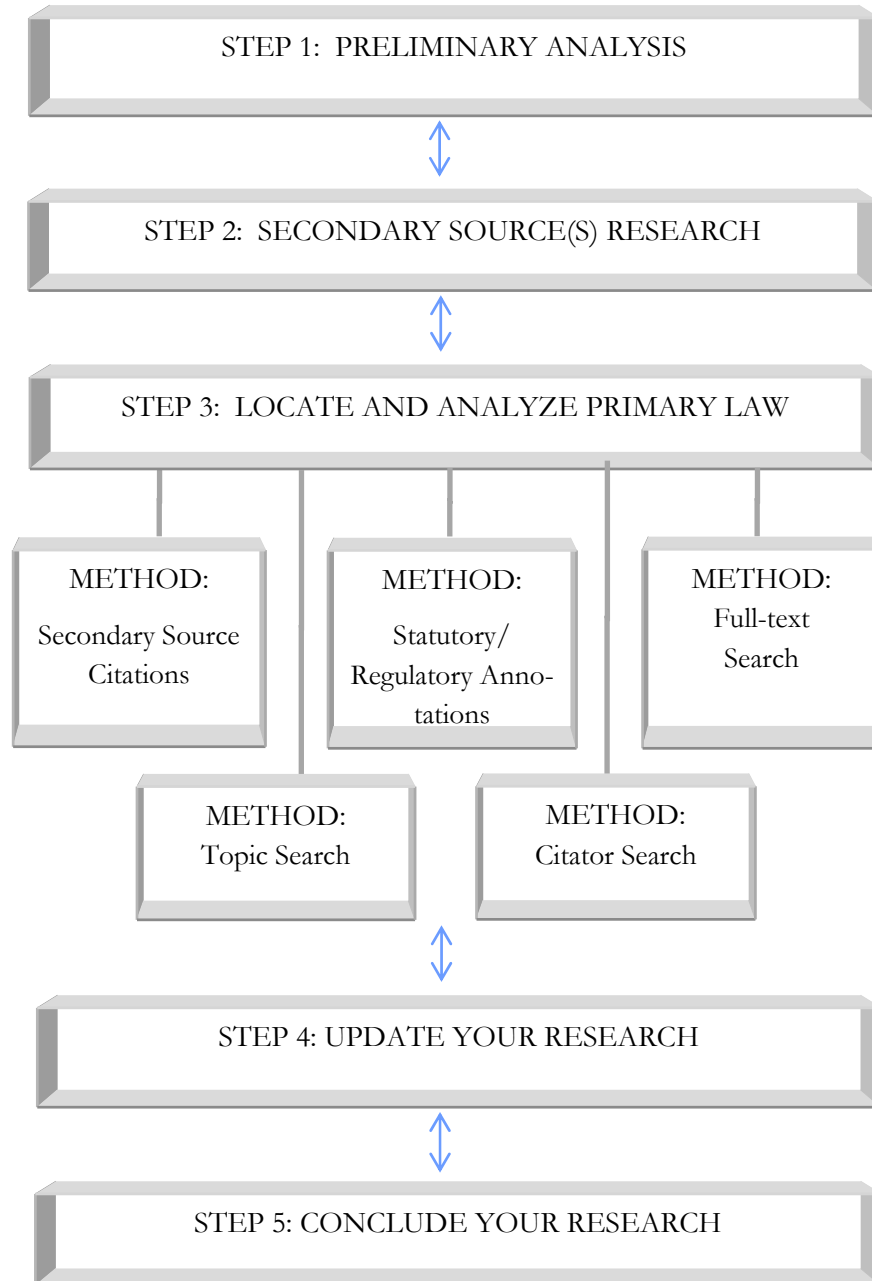
**Legal Research  
Quick Reference Guide**

**2017**

**\*\*\*\***

Provided by the Gabriel and Matilda Barnett Information  
Technology Center & the Asa V. Call Law Library

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY\*



\* Repeat the entire process or certain parts as necessary.

## FULL-TEXT SEARCHING

<b>Natural Language</b>
enter as a list of keywords (legal concepts and important facts)
include synonyms
will search for alternate endings
will automatically check for some legal phrases or you can use quotes for phrases
terms highlighted in results
<b>EXAMPLES</b>
"free speech" school university
smell odor marijuana pot justify warrantless search
disability handicap "perceived disability" discrimination labor employment

Connectors*	Terms & Connectors
AND	requires both terms or phrases to appear in the document
OR	either term or phrase may appear in the document
/s	both terms or phrases must be in the same sentence
/p	both terms or phrases must be in the same paragraph
/n	both terms or phrases must be within a certain number of words of each other (e.g., /10 requires both terms be within 10 words of each other)
!	root expander—truncate words to their root form to find multiple endings (e.g., harass! will find harass, harassed, harassing, harassment etc.)
*	wild card or universal character—replaces a single character in a term to look for variations (e.g., wom*n will find woman and women)
atleast#(term)	sets term frequency in documents, e.g., atleast5(discharge)
<b>EXAMPLES</b>	
“free speech” /s school or college	
college or university /20 student /5 speech	
disability or handicap /p discriminat! /p employ! or labor	

\* Refer to each system’s Help screens for additional information and search options.

## SECONDARY SOURCES

General/Academic	Features	Examples
Encyclopedias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Alphabetical arrangement</li> <li>· Broad topics</li> <li>· National or state-specific</li> <li>· Multiple authors</li> <li>· Multi-volume subject index</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Am. Jur. 2d</i></li> <li>- <i>C.J.S.</i></li> <li>- <i>Cal. Jur. 3d</i></li> </ul>
Treatises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· In-depth analysis on one subject</li> <li>· Scholarly in nature</li> <li>· Expert author (usually single or few authors)</li> <li>· Single or multi-volume, with index</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Nimmer on Copyright</i></li> <li>- <i>Prosser on Torts</i></li> <li>- <i>Witkin California Procedure</i></li> </ul>
<i>American Law Reports (ALR)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Compilation of individual articles (annotations)</li> <li>· Narrow legal topics</li> <li>· Covers state and federal law</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Validity of Arbitration Clause Precluding Class Action</i>, 13 A.L.R. 6th 145</li> </ul>
Law Review/Journal Articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Scholarly articles by law faculty or law students</li> <li>· Provides critical analysis, discusses emerging issues, and presents policy arguments</li> <li>· Published by law schools (generally)</li> <li>· Periodical indexes or full-text databases used to find articles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Southern California Law Review</i> (S. Cal. L. Rev.)</li> <li>- <i>Yale Journal on Regulation</i> (Yale J. on Reg.)</li> </ul>
Practice-Focused	Features	Examples
Practice Guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· “How-to” guides written for practitioners</li> <li>· Written in narrative or outline format</li> <li>· Litigation or transactional areas of law</li> <li>· Variety of aids (e.g., strategy considerations, practice pointers, and checklists)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Landlord-Tenant Practice</i> (CEB)</li> <li>- <i>Employment Litigation</i> (The Rutter Group)</li> </ul>
Looseleaves/Current Awareness Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Focused on highly-regulated areas of law</li> <li>· Comprehensive resource (including full text of primary law &amp; commentary) (particularly CCH)</li> <li>· Current awareness reporting on new legal developments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Medicare &amp; Medical Guide</i> (CCH)</li> <li>- <i>Environment Reporter</i> (Bloomberg BNA)</li> </ul>
Form Books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Topically arranged; national or state-specific</li> <li>· Litigation or transactional areas of law</li> <li>· Use as sample only (DO NOT copy verbatim)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>California Forms of Pleading &amp; Practice</i> (Matthew Bender)</li> </ul>
Pattern Jury Instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Samples used as guides for judge and attorneys drafting jury instructions</li> <li>· Designed for specific states or federal circuits</li> <li>· Separate criminal and civil sets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>California Civil Jury Instructions</i> (Judicial Council of California)</li> </ul>

## KEY PRIMARY LAW SOURCES\*

	FEDERAL	CALIFORNIA
<b>Case Law</b>		
Trial courts	<b>U.S. District Courts</b> (94 districts, e.g., C.D. Cal.) Federal Supplement (F. Supp., F. Supp. 2d, F. Supp. 3d)	<b>California Superior Courts</b> (58 counties)
Intermediate appellate courts	<b>U.S. Courts of Appeals</b> (12 regional circuits, e.g., 9th Cir.) Federal Reporter (F., F.2d, F.3d)	<b>California Courts of Appeal</b> (6 districts) California Appellate Reports (Cal. App., Cal. App. 2d-4th) West's California Reporter (Cal. Rptr., Cal. Rptr. 2d-3d)
Court of last resort	<b>U.S. Supreme Court</b> United States Reports (U.S.) Supreme Court Reporter (S. Ct.) United States Supreme Court Reports, Lawyers' Edition (L. Ed., L. Ed. 2d)	<b>Supreme Court of California</b> California Reports (Cal., Cal. 2d-4th) West's California Reporter (Cal. Rptr., Cal. Rptr. 2d-3d) Pacific Reporter (P., P.2d, P.3d)
<b>Statutory Law</b>		
Session laws (by date)	United States Statutes at Large (Stat.) United States Code Congressional and Administrative News (U.S.C.C.A.N.)	Statutes and Amendments to the Codes (Stats.) (sometimes known as Statutes of California)
Codes (by subject)	United States Code (U.S.C.) United States Code Annotated (U.S.C.A.) United States Code Service (U.S.C.S.)	No official code West's Annotated California Codes Deering's California Codes, Annotated (Cal. [subject] Code)
<b>Administrative Law</b>		
Register (by date)	Federal Register (Fed. Reg.) - proposed and final regulations	California Regulatory Notice Register - proposed regulations only
Administrative Code (by subject)	Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.)	California Code of Regulations (Cal. Code Regs.)

\* Refer to the governing court rules and citation guide(s) to determine which publications are preferred for citing purposes.

## FREE ONLINE LEGAL RESOURCES

---

### LEGAL PORTALS

---

Portals are websites that provide links to other informational sources. Below is a list of general legal portals that will link you to a variety of freely accessible legal websites.

PORTALS	WEB ADDRESS
USC Law Library's "Free Legal Web Resources"	<a href="http://lawlibguides.usc.edu/freelegalwebresources">http://lawlibguides.usc.edu/freelegalwebresources</a>
Findlaw.com (for the legal professional)	<a href="http://lp.findlaw.com">http://lp.findlaw.com</a>
Cornell Law School's Legal Information Institute	<a href="http://www.law.cornell.edu">www.law.cornell.edu</a>
The Public Library of Law	<a href="http://www.plol.org">http://www.plol.org</a>
USA.gov	<a href="http://www.usa.gov/">http://www.usa.gov/</a>

---

## ONLINE DATABASES

---

There are several online databases that offer free access to primary laws. Below are only a select few, which are more fully described on the USC Law Library's "[Free Legal Web Resources](#)" guide.

CASE LAW	
<b>Google Scholar</b> (opinions from federal and state courts)	<a href="https://scholar.google.com/">https://scholar.google.com/</a>
<b>Ravel Law</b> (opinions and visual representation of case law precedent)	<a href="https://www.ravellaw.com/">https://www.ravellaw.com/</a>
<b>California Courts - Case Law</b> (official court decisions)	<a href="http://www.courts.ca.gov/opinions.htm">http://www.courts.ca.gov/opinions.htm</a>
STATUTES, LEGISLATION, AND COURT RULES	
<b>FDsys</b> (Federal statutes & legislative history)	<a href="https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/">https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/</a>
<b>Congress.gov</b> (Federal legislative information)	<a href="https://congress.gov/">https://congress.gov/</a>
<b>US Courts</b> (Federal court rules )	<a href="http://www.uscourts.gov/rules-policies">http://www.uscourts.gov/rules-policies</a>
<b>California Legislature</b> (California statutes and bills)	<a href="http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/">http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/</a>
<b>California Courts - Rules of Court</b> (California court rules)	<a href="http://www.courts.ca.gov/rules.htm">http://www.courts.ca.gov/rules.htm</a>
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW	
<b>FDsys</b> (C.F.R. & Federal Register)	<a href="http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/">http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/</a>
<b>California Office of Administrative Law</b> (California Code of Regulations)	<a href="http://www.oal.ca.gov/">http://www.oal.ca.gov/</a>



## REFERENCE RESOURCES

### **RESEARCH GUIDES**

Research guides are curated collections of resources related to specific topics

- ◇ *USC Law Library's Research Guides* — <http://lawlibguides.usc.edu/>

Several guides can be found on this website, including the following subjects:

- Finding Federal Statutes, Regulations, and Related Cases
- Federal Legislative History Research
- Finding California Statutes, Regulations, and Related Cases
- California Legislative History Research
- Researching Local Government Law

- ◇ There are many research guides freely available online. Search for the subject area of interest and the term “research guide.” For example, Google *constitutional law research guide* or *corporate law research guide*.

### **LEGAL RESEARCH BOOKS**

- ◇ *Legal Research Course Reader (from your 1L Legal Research course)*
- ◇ *Legal Research Guide: Patterns and Practice* (7th ed.) (LexisNexis 2015)
- ◇ *Legal Research in a Nutshell* (12th ed.) (Thomson/West 2016)
- ◇ *Legal Research: How to Find & Understand the Law* (17th ed.) (Nolo Press 2015)

### **LAW LIBRARIES**

USC Law Library  
699 Exposition Blvd., 2nd Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90089  
Phone: (213) 740-5070  
research@law.usc.edu  
<http://gould.usc.edu/library/>

LA Law Library  
301 West 1st Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Phone: (213) 785-2529

Orange County Law Library  
515 North Flower Street  
Santa Ana, CA 92703  
Phone: (714) 834-3397

Riverside County Law Library  
3989 Lemon Street  
Riverside, CA 92501  
Phone: (951) 955-6390

San Bernardino County Law Library  
402 North “D” Street  
San Bernardino, CA 92401  
Phone: (909) 885-3020

San Diego Public Law Library  
1105 Front Street  
San Diego, CA 92101  
Phone: (619) 531-3900