

Searching Cases on Westlaw

Retrieving a Case by Citation

The quickest way to retrieve a case on Westlaw when you know its citation is to use the Find service. You do not need to access a database. From most tabbed pages you can type a citation, e.g., **121 sct 2381**, in the *Find by citation* text box in the *Shortcuts* section and click **Go**. At the tabbed Westlaw page, type the citation in the *Find this document by citation* text box and click **Go**.

You can also click **Find&Print** at the top of any page to display the Find a Document page. Then type your citation in the *Find this document by citation* text box. To view a list of publications that can be retrieved with Find or to view the proper abbreviation for a publication, click **Publications List** in the left frame.

Retrieving a Case by Party Name

You can quickly retrieve a case by party name by using a fill-in-the-blank template. Complete the following steps to retrieve a case by party name using a template:

1. Click **Find&Print** at the top of any page. At the Find a Document page, click **Find a Case by Party Name** in the left frame.
2. Type one or more parties' names in the text boxes in the right frame.
3. Select the jurisdiction in which the case was heard or the reporter in which it was published and click **Go**.

For example, to retrieve *Palmer v. A.H. Robins Co.*, 684 P.2d 187 (Colo. 1984), type **palmer** and **robins** in the text boxes. Select **State Courts**, then select **Colorado** from the corresponding drop-down list and click **Go**.

Note: At a case law database Search page, you can click **Search by Party Name**, type one or both parties' names in the text boxes, and click **Search Westlaw**.

Searching for Cases by Issue

At any tabbed page, access a database by typing its identifier, e.g., **sct**, in the *Search these databases* text box in the left frame and clicking **Go**. You can also type the description of a database, e.g., **u.s. supreme court cases**, in the *Search these databases* text box and click **Go**. From the list of displayed databases, click the link for the database you want.

Then from the database Search page, complete these steps to run a search:

1. Choose the search method you want to use. (Term and Connectors is the default search method unless you change it to Natural Language in your Westlaw Preferences.)
2. Type your search.
 - To search using Natural Language, type a description of your issue in plain English, e.g., **viewpoint discrimination by the government in a public forum**.
 - To search using Terms and Connectors, type a query using key terms from your issue and connectors to identify the relationship between terms, e.g., **“americans with disabilities act” a.d.a. /p protect! /s class group**.
3. Click **Search Westlaw**.

Note: The *Search* section of a tabbed page enables you to type a Terms and Connectors query or a Natural Language description of your issue, choose one or more databases, and run the search, all from the same page. In the *Resources* section of a tabbed page, click a database name to display the Search page.

Westlaw is available on the Web at www.westlaw.com.

For technical assistance, call West Customer Technical Support at **1-800-WESTLAW** (1-800-937-8529).

For search assistance, call the West Reference Attorneys at **1-800-REF-ATTY** (1-800-733-2889).

If you are a law student, call **1-800-850-WEST** (1-800-850-9378) for assistance.

Natural Language Searching

The Natural Language search method allows you to use plain English to retrieve relevant documents. Simply enter a description of your issue using terms, alone or in sentence form, that describe its main concepts. You will get better results if you use terms you think a court would use to describe the issue. Natural Language searching is available in most Westlaw databases.

After you run your search, the documents most closely matching the concepts in your description are displayed first. Use the enhanced list of citations to help you identify relevant documents in your search result.

Terms and Connectors Searching

The Terms and Connectors search method allows you to run a more precise search. Enter key terms from your issue and use connectors to specify the relationship between the terms. For example, you can require that your terms appear in the same sentence or the same paragraph. Terms and Connectors searching is available in all Westlaw databases.

After you run your search, cases are displayed in reverse chronological order in the result list.

Searching by Field

Almost all documents on Westlaw are composed of several parts called *fields*. To retrieve only those cases in which your search terms are significant, restrict your search to the synopsis field (sy), the digest field (di), or both, e.g., **sy,di(discharg! /p bankruptcy)**. The synopsis field contains the summary paragraph at the beginning of the case; the digest field contains the headnotes and topic and key number information in the case, as shown in the example below.

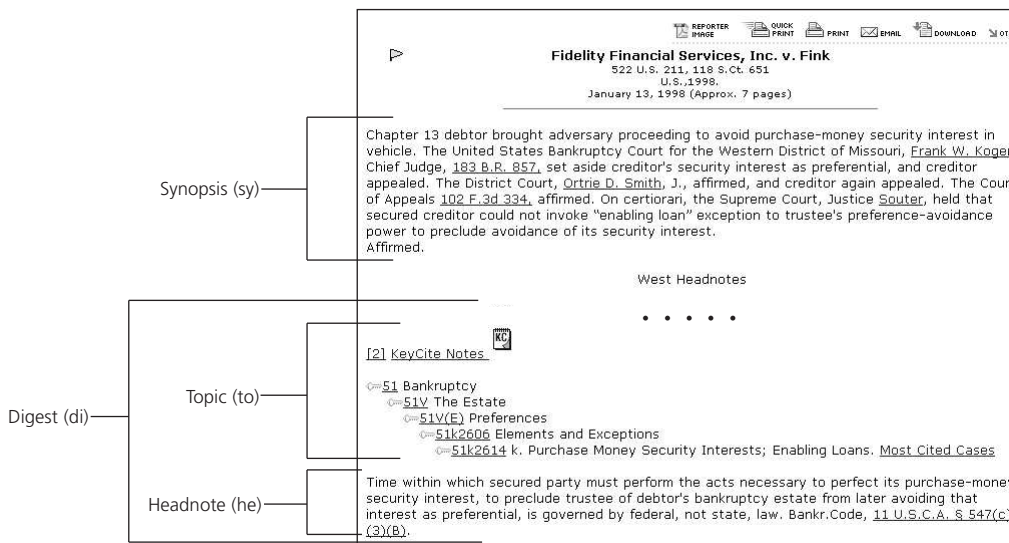
Tips for Terms and Connectors Searching

- If your search term is a compound word, use its hyphenated form to retrieve all variations. For example, type **good-will** to retrieve *good will*, *good-will*, and *goodwill*.
- If your search term is an abbreviation, type it with periods and without spaces to retrieve all variations. For example, type **h.i.v.** to retrieve *H.I.V.*, *H. I. V.*, *HIV*, and *H I V*.
- Use the root expander (!) to retrieve words with variant endings. The root expander must always be placed at the end of a term. For example, type **distribut!** to retrieve *distribute*, *distributed*, *distribution*, and *distributing*.
- If you type a word in its singular form, you will retrieve both the singular and plural forms. If you use the plural, however, you will retrieve only the plural form.
- Use the universal character (*) to represent one variable character. You can place the universal character anywhere in a term except at the beginning. For example, type **gr*w** to retrieve *grew* and *grow*.

Using the Thesaurus

The online thesaurus is useful for finding alternative search terms for both Natural Language and Terms and Connectors searches. Access a database and type a search at the Search page, then click **Thesaurus** to select alternative terms from a list of terms that are related to the terms in your search.

Useful Field Restrictions in Terms and Connectors Searching



Using West Topic and Key Numbers and the West Key Number Digest

If you have identified a topic and key number associated with the legal issue you are researching, you can run a search using the topic and key number to quickly retrieve cases involving the same legal issue. For example, to search for cases with headnotes classified under topic 231H (Labor and Employment) and key number 758 (Wrongful Discharge in General), first access the appropriate database. At the Search page click the **Terms and Connectors** tab and type **231hk758** in the *Search* text box.

You can also use a topic and key number search in conjunction with other search terms. For example, to search for cases with headnotes classified under the above topic and key number that relate to contracts, type **231hk758 /p contract**.

The West Key Number Digest (also known as the Custom Digest) contains the complete topic and key number outline used by West attorney-editors to classify headnotes. To access the West Key Number Digest, click **Custom Digest** at a database Search page or click **Key Numbers** at the top of any page, then click **West Key Number Digest** under *Browse Key Numbers*. To browse the list of topic and key numbers, click the plus (+) and minus (-) symbols. To search for cases with headnotes classified under specific topic and key numbers, select the check boxes next to those topic and key numbers, then click **Search selected**. Select the jurisdiction from which you want to retrieve headnotes and click **Search**.

Using ResultsPlus® to Access Additional Resources

ResultsPlus offers links to additional sources of information that you might otherwise miss when you research case law. When you search a case law database, ResultsPlus automatically displays related content on the right side of

the result list, as shown in the figure below. This content includes *American Law Reports* (ALR®), *American Jurisprudence 2d* (Am Jur® 2d,) and selected treatises and law reviews. To view the full text of one of the listed documents, click its title in the ResultsPlus list.

ResultsPlus may also suggest up to two West topic and key numbers relevant to your research. Simply click a topic and key number reference in the ResultsPlus list to quickly retrieve a single Westlaw document containing headnotes from cases discussing the legal issue classified under that topic and key number. The most recent cases are listed first.

Using KeySearch® to Provide a Query for You

KeySearch helps you to find cases and secondary sources in a specific area of the law by allowing you to select terms from a classification system based on the West Key Number System®. KeySearch then provides a Terms and Connectors query for you. You do not have to formulate a query yourself.

To access KeySearch, click **Key Numbers** at the top of any page. Then click **KeySearch** under *Browse Key Numbers*. Browse the list of topics and subtopics in the right frame by clicking the **Browse** icons (📁). You can also scan the list of topics and subtopics for specific terms by typing the terms in the text box in the left frame and clicking **Go**. (If you use more than one term, use a connector between them, e.g., **child /3 support**).

To select a topic or subtopic for which KeySearch will supply a query, click the **Search** icon (🔍) or click the **Search all of ...** link at the top of the page. Then choose the source you want to retrieve documents from and, if desired, add your own terms in the *Add Search terms* text box. KeySearch supplies a query for you based on the topic or subtopics you selected, the search terms you added, and the source you selected. Click **Search** to run the KeySearch query.

Edit Search: 231hk758 /p contract **Database:** allfeds **SEARCH** [Locate in Result](#)

Results: 26 Documents [Add Search to WestClip](#)

Add Related Terms: agreement offer acceptance consideration performance breach [Select all]

Expand Search: Change Database to [Federal & State Cases](#)

SELECT TO PRINT, EMAIL, ETC.

1. Bodett v. CoxCom, Inc.,
366 F.3d 736, 93 Fair Empl.Prac.Cas. (BNA) 1108, 85 Empl. Prac. Dec. P 41,682, 04 Cal. Daily Op. Serv. 3559, 2004 Daily Journal D.A.R. 5008, C.A.9 (Ariz.), April 26, 2004 (NO. 03-15112)

...Employment Practices 78k 1122 k. Discharge or Layoff. 231H Labor and Employment: 231HVIII Adverse Employment Action 231HVIII(A) In General **231H k 758** k. Wrongful Discharge in General. (Formerly 255k30 (1) Master and Servant) 231H Labor and Employment: 231HVIII Adverse Employment Action 231HVIII(A) In General 231Hk 833 Express or Implied **Contracts**, Adverse Action Under 231Hk 835 k, Discharge or Layoff. (Formerly 255k30(1) Master and Servant) 231H Labor and Employment: 231HVIII Adverse...

...of four theories of liability in order to state claim as matter of law: (1) termination in breach of written **contract**, signed by both employer and employee or expressly included in employment handbook, setting forth that employment relationship shall remain in...

2. Hamilton v. Seque Software Inc.,
232 F.3d 473, 16 IER Cases 1699, C.A.5 (Tex.), November 20, 2000 (NO. 00-10541)

...in General. (Formerly 255k20 255k8(1) Master and Servant) 231H Labor and Employment: 231HVIII Adverse Employment Action 231HVIII(A) In General **231H k 758** k. Wrongful Discharge in General. (Formerly 255k20 255k8(1) Master and Servant) Under Texas law, employee's success in a wrongful termination/breach of **contract** suit can depend on whether he or she was hired as a term employee or an at-will employee, and...

ResultsPlus [About](#)

Am.Jur. Trials
1. [Representing the Government Contractor](#)

Am.Jur. Trials
2. [Construction Dispute Resolution Arbitration and Beyond](#)

Causes of Action
3. [Cause of Action Against Employer of Independent Contractor to Establish Liability Based on Retained Control of Contractor's Work](#)

Causes of Action
4. [Cause of Action for Breach of Contract for Construction or Repair of Residence](#)

Am.Jur. Trials
5. [Miller Act Litigation](#)

At the result list, click a title in the ResultsPlus list to view the full text of the document.

Checking Your Citations with KeyCite®

Use KeyCite to determine whether your case is good law and to retrieve a comprehensive list of citing references. You can quickly access KeyCite information for the case you are viewing by clicking the KeyCite status flag, if available. Click **KeyCite** at the top of any page to view a detailed explanation of the KeyCite status flags.

KeyCite Status Flags for Cases



A red flag warns that the case is no longer good law for at least one of the points of law it contains.



A yellow flag warns that the case has some negative history but has not been reversed or overruled.



A blue H indicates that the case has some history.



A green C indicates that the case has citing references but no direct history or negative citing references.

Click the status flag or **Full History** to view the history of the displayed case.

Click **Direct History (Graphical View)** to view direct history in a graphical view.

Click **Citing References** to view a list of cases, administrative materials, secondary sources, and briefs and other court documents that cite the case.

The screenshot shows the KeyCite interface for the case *West v. Thomson Newspapers*, 872 P.2d 999, Utah, 1994. The interface is divided into a sidebar and a main content area. The sidebar contains a search bar, a 'Find citation:' field, and a 'Go' button. Below this are several navigation options: 'Full History', 'Direct History (Graphical View)', 'Citing References', and 'Monitor With KeyCite Alert'. The main content area displays the case title, a 'History' section (showing 3 of 5 documents), a 'Direct History' section with a 'KeyCited Citation' for *West v. Thomson Newspapers*, 872 P.2d 999, 23 Media L. Rep. 1097 (Utah Mar 22, 1994) (NO. 920276), and a 'Negative Citing References (U.S.A.)' section listing cases like *Coulter & Smith, Ltd. v. Russell*, 966 P.2d 852, 352 Utah Adv. Rep. 20 (Utah Sep 25, 1998) (NO. 960462) ★ ★ HN: 10 (P.2d) Distinguished by.

KeyCite history for a case

Viewing the History of a Case

To view the history of a displayed case, click **Full History** or **Direct History (Graphical View)** on the Links tab. Click **Full History** to see the full case history in the right frame, including the direct history and negative citing references. Click **Direct History (Graphical View)** to view the direct history of the case in an easy-to-read graphical view, with each court decision referenced in a box at the appropriate trial or appellate court level. The specific decision you are checking in KeyCite is clearly marked.

Viewing Citing References for a Case

To view a list of cases, administrative materials, secondary sources, and briefs and other court documents that cite your case, click **Citing References** on the Links tab. Negative citing cases are listed first; the remaining cases are listed according to the depth of treatment they give your case. Administrative decisions, secondary sources, and briefs and other court documents are listed last.

Limiting Citing References

You can limit your list of citing references by headnote, Locate term, jurisdiction, date, document type, or depth of treatment category. Click **Limit KeyCite Display** at the bottom of the KeyCite citing references result. At the KeyCite Limits page, click the arrows in the left frame to move from one restriction to another. Use the check boxes, text boxes, and drop-down lists in the right frame to define your restrictions. Then click **Apply** to display the list of citing references with the restrictions you specified.