

Research Tips for Case Law

Restricting Your Search by Court or Jurisdiction

This guide discusses how to restrict your search in state or federal case law databases to a specific court or jurisdiction. It provides model searches and suggested databases that you can refer to for guidance as you conduct research on Westlaw.

Searching for Cases From a Specific Court or Jurisdiction

If you only need to retrieve cases from a specific jurisdiction, your query may not need to specify the jurisdiction. Many Westlaw case law databases are already restricted to a specific jurisdiction. For example, only cases from Texas state courts are contained in the Texas Cases database (TX-CS) and only decisions from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit are contained in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit Cases database (CTA9). To retrieve a more focused search result, choose the most specific database that contains the courts or jurisdictions you want to search.

ADDING A FIELD RESTRICTION TO YOUR QUERY

Many databases contain cases from more than one court or jurisdiction. For example, the TX-CS database contains cases from the Texas Supreme Court, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, the former Texas Court of Civil Appeals, and the Texas courts of appeals. To further restrict your search to cases from a specific court within a state, or a specific state within a circuit, you can search for the name or abbreviation of the court in the court or prelim field.

Court Field

In case law documents on Westlaw, the court field (co) includes the abbreviation for the name of the court of decision. To use a court field restriction, type co followed by the court abbreviation enclosed in parentheses. Use the AND connector (&) to add the field restriction to your query.

For example, to retrieve Arizona Court of Appeals opinions relating to antitrust law, access the Arizona Cases database (AZ-CS) and type

co(ariz.app) & anti-trust

To retrieve U.S. Supreme Court opinions originating from state courts in the Ninth Circuit, access the All U.S. Supreme Court Cases database (SCT) and type

co(9)

Prelim Field

In case law documents on Westlaw, the prelim field (pr) contains the specific court information for a case, such as the name of the court and district, division, or county information. By searching in this field, you can restrict a search to a specific district or division. For example, to retrieve decisions from the Court of Appeals of Ohio, First District, access the Ohio Cases database (OH-CS) and type

pr("first district") & co(ohio.app)

or

pr("court of appeals" & "first district")

For assistance using Westlaw, call 1-800-WESTLAW (1-800-937-8529).

For free reference materials, visit west.thomson.com/westlaw/guides.

State Databases

STATE COURTS

To limit your search to decisions from a specific state, search in the state's individual case law database. For example, to retrieve decisions from New York, search in the New York Cases database (NY-CS). (Database identifiers for state cases are formed by adding -CS to the state's two-letter postal abbreviation.)

To retrieve cases from more than one state and fewer than all 50 states, access the All State Cases database (ALLSTATES) and type the postal abbreviations for the states in the court field. For example, to restrict your search to cases from the state courts of Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois, access the ALLSTATES database and add the following court field restriction to your query:

co(mn ia wi il)

Use regional reporter databases to retrieve cases from state courts in those regions. In addition to the cases reported in West's® National Reporter System® (Figure 1), these databases contain the same slip opinions and unreported decisions that the individual state case law databases contain.

Database Name	Identifier	States Included
West's Atlantic Reporter®	ATL	CT, DE, DC, MD, ME, NH, NJ, PA, RI, and VT
West's North Eastern Reporter®	NE	IL, IN, MA, NY, and OH
West's North Western Reporter®	NW	IA, MI, MN, ND, NE, SD, and WI
West's Pacific Reporter®	PAC	AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, KS, MT, NM, NV, OK, OR, UT, WA, and WY
West's South Eastern Reporter®	SE	GA, NC, SC, VA, and WV
West's Southern Reporter®	SO	AL, FL, LA, and MS
West's South Western Reporter®	SW	AR, KY, MO, TN, and TX

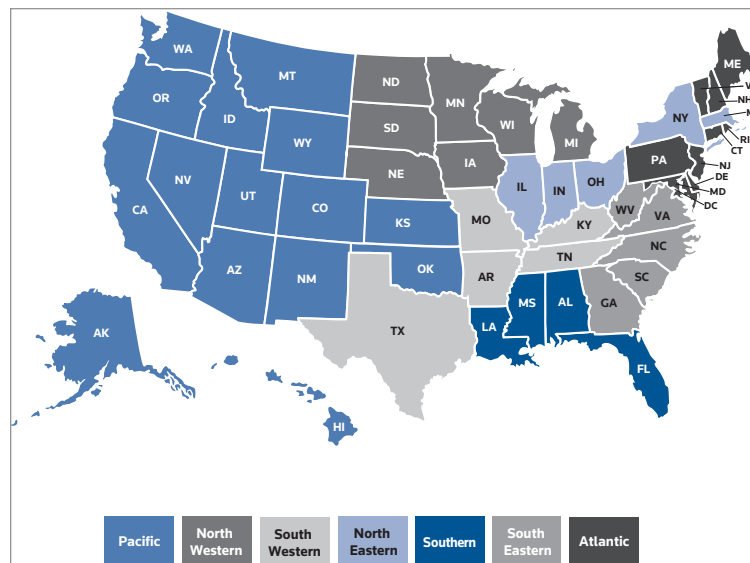


Figure 1. West's National Reporter System

HIGHEST COURT IN A STATE

To restrict a search to cases from the highest court in a state, access the state's case law database and add the following court field restriction to your query:

co(high)

To retrieve cases from the highest court of several states at once, access ALLSTATES or a regional reporter database. In the court field, type the postal abbreviations of the states followed by **& high**. For example, to retrieve cases from the highest courts of Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri, add the following court field restriction to your query:

co(ia ks mo & high)

INTERMEDIATE APPELLATE OR LOWER STATE COURTS

To restrict a search to the decisions of a state's lower courts, access the state's case law database and add the following court field restriction to your query:

co(low)

To retrieve cases from the lower courts in several states at once, access the ALLSTATES or a regional reporter database. In the court field, type the postal abbreviations of the states followed by **& low**. For example, to retrieve cases from the lower courts of Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina, add the following court field restriction to your query:

co(fl ga sc & low)

SPECIFIC APPELLATE OR LOWER COURTS

To restrict a search to a specific appellate or lower court, type the abbreviation of the court in the court field. Pages 4–6 contain a list of state court abbreviations. For example, to restrict a search to the Court of Common Pleas of Ohio, add the following court field restriction to your query:

co(ohio.com.pl)

You can restrict your search to more than one court at once. For example, to retrieve cases involving alimony or spousal support from the New York Family Court or the New York District Court, access the New York Cases database (NY-CS) and type the following query:

alimony "spousal support" & co(n.y.fam.ct n.y.dist.ct)

To restrict your search to a specific district, division, or county, use the prelim field. For example, to retrieve cases from New York Family Court, Orange County, access NY-CS and type the following query:

co(n.y.fam.ct) & pr(orange)

STATE COURT ABBREVIATIONS

Use the following abbreviations to restrict a search to the decisions of a specific state court.

State (Individual State Cases Database)	Court	Abbreviation
Alabama (AL-CS)	Court of Civil Appeals Court of Criminal Appeals Former Court of Appeals	ala.civ.app ala.crim.app ala.app
Alaska (AK-CS)	Court of Appeals	alaska.app
Arizona (AZ-CS)	Court of Appeals Tax Court	ariz.app ariz.tax
Arkansas (AR-CS)	Court of Appeals	ark.app
California (CA-CS)	Appellate Division, Superior Court Court of Appeal State Bar Court Superior Court	cal.app.super cal.app cal.bar cal.superior
Colorado (CO-CS)	Court of Appeals Office of the Presiding Disciplinary Judge of the Supreme Court	colo.app colo.o.p.d.j
Connecticut (CT-CS)	Appellate Court Superior Court Former Circuit Court Former Court of Common Pleas	conn.app conn.super conn.cir conn.com.pl
Delaware (DE-CS)	Court of Chancery Court of Common Pleas Court on the Judiciary Family Court Superior Court	del.ch del.com.pl del.jud del.fam.ct del.super
District of Columbia (DC-CS)	Court of Appeals	d.c.app
Florida (FL-CS)	District Court of Appeal	fla.app
Georgia (GA-CS)	Court of Appeals	ga.app
Hawaii (HI-CS)	Intermediate Court of Appeals	hawai'i.app
Idaho (ID-CS)	Court of Appeals	idaho.app
Illinois (IL-CS)	Appellate Court Court of Claims	ill.app ill.ct.cl
Indiana (IN-CS)	Court of Appeals Tax Court	ind.app ind.tax
Iowa (IA-CS)	Court of Appeals	iowa.app
Kansas (KS-CS)	Court of Appeals	kan.app
Kentucky (KY-CS)	Court of Appeals	ky.app
Louisiana (LA-CS)	Court of Appeal	la.app
Maine (ME-CS)	Superior Court	me.super
Maryland (MD-CS)	Court of Special Appeals Tax Court	md.app md.tax

STATE COURT ABBREVIATIONS, CONTINUED

State (Individual State Cases Database)	Court	Abbreviation
Massachusetts (MA-CS)	Appeals Court Appellate Division Land Court Superior Court	mass.app.ct mass.app.div mass.land.ct mass.super
Michigan (MI-CS)	Court of Appeals	mich.app
Minnesota (MN-CS)	Court of Appeals Tax Court	minn.app minn.tax
Mississippi (MS-CS)	Court of Appeals	miss.app
Missouri (MO-CS)	Court of Appeals	mo.app
Montana (MT-CS)		
Nebraska (NE-CS)	Court of Appeals	neb.app
Nevada (NV-CS)		
New Hampshire (NH-CS)		
New Jersey (NJ-CS)	Superior Court Superior Court, Appellate Division Superior Court, Chancery Division Superior Court, Law Division Tax Court	n.j.super n.j.super.a.d n.j.super.ch n.j.super.l n.j.tax
New Mexico (NM-CS)	Court of Appeals	n.m.app
New York (NY-CS)	City Court Civil Court, City of New York County Court Court of Claims Criminal Court, City of New York District Court Family Court Justice Court Supreme Court Supreme Court, Appellate Division Supreme Court, Appellate Term Surrogate's Court	n.y.city.ct n.y.city.civ.ct n.y.co.ct n.y.ct.cl n.y.city.crim.ct n.y.dist.ct n.y.fam.ct n.y.just.ct n.y.sup n.y.a.d n.y.sup.app.term n.y.sur
North Carolina (NC-CS)	Court of Appeals	n.c.app
North Dakota (ND-CS)	Court of Appeals	n.d.app
Ohio (OH-CS)	Board of Commissioners on the Unauthorized Practice of Law Court of Appeals Court of Common Pleas Municipal Court	ohio.bd.unauth.prac ohio.app ohio.com.pl ohio.mun
Oklahoma (OK-CS)	Court of Civil Appeals Court of Criminal Appeals Court on the Judiciary	okla.civ.app okla.crim.app okla.jud
Oregon (OR-CS)	Court of Appeals Tax Court	or.app or.tax
Pennsylvania (PA-CS)	Commonwealth Court Court of Common Pleas Superior Court	pa.cmwth pa.com.pl pa.super

STATE COURT ABBREVIATIONS, CONTINUED

State (Individual State Cases Database)	Court	Abbreviation
Rhode Island (RI-CS)	Superior Court	r.i.super
South Carolina (SC-CS)	Court of Appeals	s.c.app
South Dakota (SD-CS)		
Tennessee (TN-CS)	Court of Appeals Court of Criminal Appeals Supreme Court, Special Workers' Compensation Appeals Panel	tenn.ct.app tenn.crim.app tenn.workers.comp.panel
Texas (TX-CS)	Court of Appeals Court of Civil Appeals Court of Criminal Appeals Review Tribunal Special Court of Review	tex.app tex.civ.app tex.crim.app tex.rev.trib tex.spec.ct.rev
Utah (UT-CS)	Court of Appeals	utah.app
Vermont (VT-CS)		
Virginia (VA-CS)	Circuit Court Court of Appeals	va.cir.ct va.app
Washington (WA-CS)	Court of Appeals	wash.app
West Virginia (WV-CS)		
Wisconsin (WI-CS)	Court of Appeals	wis.app
Wyoming (WY-CS)		

Federal Databases

DISTRICT COURTS OF AN INDIVIDUAL STATE

To retrieve decisions from all U.S. district courts at once, search in the U.S. District Courts Cases database (DCT). For pre-1945 cases only, search in the U.S. District Courts Cases–Before 1945 database (DCT-OLD).

You can restrict a search in the DCT database to the decisions of the district courts in several states. To do so, type the states' postal abbreviations in the court field. For example, to restrict a search to the district courts of Texas, Florida, and Wisconsin, access the DCT database and add the following court field restriction to your query:

co(tx fl wi)

To retrieve decisions from the U.S. district courts sitting in a particular state, access the U.S. District Court Cases database for that state, e.g., U.S. District Court Cases for Florida (DCTFL). To restrict your search to a specific district court within the state, e.g., the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida, add a prelim field (pr) restriction to your query, e.g., **pr(m.d.)**.

DISTRICT COURTS DECISIONS WITHIN A SPECIFIC CIRCUIT

To retrieve cases from U.S. district courts within a specific federal circuit, access the U.S. District Court Cases database for the circuit, e.g., U.S. District Court Cases for Second Circuit States (DCT2).

To search for district court cases from more than one circuit, access the DCT database and search for the circuit numbers or abbreviation in the court field. For example, to retrieve cases from district courts in the Second Circuit and the Tenth Circuit, access the DCT database and add the following court field restriction to your query:

co(2 10)

To retrieve cases from the specialized courts listed below, access the DCT or DCT-OLD database and use the following court field restrictions:

To retrieve decisions from	Type
Former U.S. Customs Court	co(cust.ct)
Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation	co(jud.pan.mult.lit)
Former Special Court, Regional Rail Reorganization	co(sp.ct.r.r.r.a)
U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims	co(vet.app)
U.S. Court of International Trade	co(cit)

UNITED STATES COURTS OF APPEALS

To retrieve decisions from all federal courts of appeals at once, access the U.S. Courts of Appeals Cases database (CTA). For pre-1945 cases only, access the U.S. Courts of Appeals Cases–Before 1945 database (CTA-OLD). To retrieve cases from a specific court of appeals, access the individual database for that circuit. For example, access the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit Cases database (CTA2) to retrieve Second Circuit decisions. The illustration below shows the federal judicial circuits.

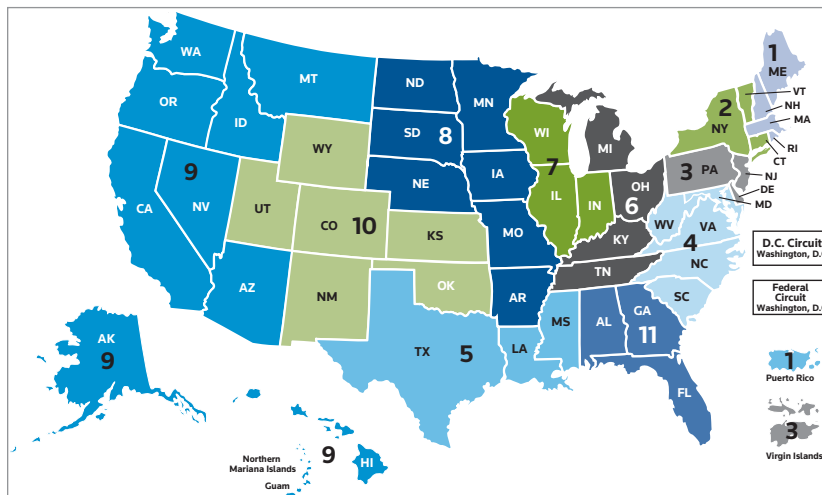


Figure 2. Federal Judicial Courts

To retrieve cases from more than one circuit, but not all circuits, access the CTA database and type the circuit numbers or abbreviations in the court field. For example, to retrieve cases from the Second Circuit and the Tenth Circuit, add the following court field restriction to your query:

`co(2 10)`

Use this chart to retrieve decisions from a specific court of appeals.

To retrieve decisions from this jurisdiction	Use this field restriction in the CTA database	Or access this database
First Circuit, which covers Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Puerto Rico, and Rhode Island	co(1)	CTA1
Second Circuit, which covers Connecticut, New York, and Vermont	co(2)	CTA2
Third Circuit, which covers Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the Virgin Islands	co(3)	CTA3
Fourth Circuit, which covers Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia	co(4)	CTA4
Fifth Circuit, which covers Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, and the former Canal Zone Judicial District	co(5)	CTA5
Sixth Circuit, which covers Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee	co(6)	CTA6
Seventh Circuit, which covers Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin	co(7)	CTA7
Eighth Circuit, which covers Arkansas, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota	co(8)	CTA8
Ninth Circuit, which covers Alaska, Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, the Northern Mariana Islands, Oregon, and Washington	co(9)	CTA9
Tenth Circuit, which covers Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Utah, and Wyoming	co(10)	CTA10
Eleventh Circuit, which covers Alabama, Florida, and Georgia	co(11)	CTA11
District of Columbia Circuit	co(cadc)	CTADC
Federal Circuit	co(cafed)	CTAF

To retrieve cases from the specialized courts listed below, access the CTA or CTA-OLD database and use the following court field restrictions.

To retrieve decisions from	Type
Former U.S. Court of Customs and Patent Appeals	co(pat.app)
Former U.S. Emergency Court of Appeals	co(em.app)
Former Temporary Emergency Court of Appeals	co(em.app)

COURTS OF APPEALS AND DISTRICT COURTS

To retrieve decisions from U.S. district courts in a particular state; the U.S. court of appeals for the circuit containing that state; and the U.S. Supreme Court in cases that arose in that state, access the All Federal Cases database (ALLFEDS) or a Federal Judicial Circuit, Individual Circuit Cases database (FEDX-ALL, where X is a circuit number or abbreviation). For example, to retrieve opinions from U.S. district courts in New York, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, and the U.S. Supreme Court, access ALLFEDS or the Federal Judicial Circuit, Second Circuit Cases database (FED2-ALL) and then add the following court field restriction to your query:

co(ny)

To exclude U.S. Supreme Court cases from your result, use the BUT NOT connector (%). For example, to retrieve opinions from U.S. district courts in New York and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, but not the U.S. Supreme Court, access the ALLFEDS or FED2-ALL database and add the following terms to your query:

co(ny) % co(high)

COURTS OF APPEALS DECISIONS FROM AN INDIVIDUAL STATE

To retrieve decisions from the U.S. court of appeals for the circuit containing a specific state, access the appropriate U.S. court of appeals cases database and type the postal abbreviation of the state in the court field. For example, to retrieve federal court of appeals decisions from Nevada, access the CTA9 database and add the following court field restriction to your query:

co(nv)

U.S. SUPREME COURT CASES FROM A SPECIFIC STATE

To retrieve U.S. Supreme Court cases arising in a specific state, access the SCT database and type the postal abbreviation of the state in the court field. For example, to retrieve U.S. Supreme Court cases that originated in Connecticut, access the SCT database and add the following court field restriction to your query:

co(ct)

BANKRUPTCY COURTS

To restrict your search to bankruptcy court decisions, access the Federal Bankruptcy–Bankruptcy Court Cases database (FBKR-BCT). This database contains decisions of the U.S. bankruptcy courts and U.S. bankruptcy appellate panels.

To restrict your search in the FBKR-BCT database to the bankruptcy courts of a specific state, type the postal abbreviation of the state in the court field. For example, to retrieve federal bankruptcy cases from Ohio, access FBKR-BCT and add the following court field restriction to your query:

co(oh)

To restrict a search to the bankruptcy appellate panels, search for the abbreviation **b.a.p.** in the court field:

co(b.a.p.)

U.S. COURT OF FEDERAL CLAIMS, FORMER U.S. CLAIMS COURT, AND FORMER U.S. COURT OF CLAIMS

The U.S. Court of Federal Claims Cases database (FEDCL) contains cases from federal courts with original jurisdiction over claims against the United States. It includes cases from the following courts:

- U.S. Court of Federal Claims (Coverage begins with 1992)
- Former U.S. Claims Court (Coverage is from 1982 to 1992)
- Former U.S. Court of Claims (Coverage is from 1945 to 1982)

To retrieve cases from these courts, access the FEDCL database and use the following court field restrictions.

To retrieve decisions from	Type
U.S. Court of Federal Claims	co(fed.cl)
U.S. Claims Court	co(cl.ct)
U.S. Court of Claims	co(ct.cl)

Access the U.S. Court of Claims–Before 1945 database (FEDCL-OLD) to retrieve pre-1945 decisions.

TAX COURT DECISIONS

To retrieve decisions of the U.S. Tax Court, access the Federal Taxation–Tax Court Cases database (FTX-TCT). This database contains decisions and memorandum decisions from the U.S. Tax Court and the former Tax Court of the United States and its predecessor agency, the U.S. Board of Tax Appeals, and summary opinions from the U.S. Tax Court. Coverage of decisions begins with 1924; coverage of memorandum decisions begins with 1928; and coverage of summary opinions begins with 2001.

To restrict your search to memorandum decisions from the U.S. Tax Court, the former Tax Court of the United States, and its predecessor agency, the Board of Tax Appeals, access the Federal Taxation–Tax Court Memorandum Decisions database (FTX-TCM).

MILITARY JUSTICE

The Military Justice Cases database (MJ) contains reported and unreported documents from the United States Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces (formerly U.S. Court of Military Appeals) and the military courts of criminal appeals (formerly courts of military review).

To retrieve cases from the specialized courts listed below, access the MJ database and use the following court field restrictions:

To retrieve decisions from	Type
Former U.S. Air Force Court of Military Review	co(afcmr)
U.S. Air Force Court of Criminal Appeals	co(a.f.ct.crim.app)
Former U.S. Army Court of Military Review	co(acmr)
U.S. Army Court of Criminal Appeals	co(army.ct.crim.app)
Former U.S. Coast Guard Court of Military Review	co(cgcmr)
U.S. Coast Guard Court of Criminal Appeals	co(c.g.ct.crim.app)
Former U.S. Court of Military Appeals	co(cma)
Former U.S. Navy Court of Military Review	co(ncmr)
Former U.S. Navy–Marine Corps Court of Military Review	co(nmcmr)
U.S. Navy–Marine Corps Court of Criminal Appeals	co(n.m.ct.crim.app)

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