

West Key Number System®

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Searching by West Topic and Key Number

When you have identified a topic and key number associated with the legal issue you are researching, you can run a Terms and Connectors search using that topic and key number to quickly retrieve cases involving the same legal issue. A topic and key number search does not require a field-restricted format; that is, you do not need to include a field name or abbreviation as part of your search request. For example, to search for cases with headnotes classified under topic 343 (Sales) and key number 255 (Parties; Privity), type **343k255**.

To narrow your search, add search terms. For example, the query **343k255 /p contract** retrieves cases with headnotes classified under topic 343 and key number 255 that also contain the term *contract* in the same digest paragraph.

Topic field searching

You can also retrieve cases with headnotes classified under a specific West digest topic by using a topic field (to) restriction in your Terms and Connectors search. In addition to the topic name and number, the topic field contains the hierarchical classification information, key number, and text of the related key line. For example, to retrieve cases with headnotes classified under topic 409 (Wills), type **to(409)** or **to(wills)**. The broader search is **to(wills)** because it retrieves cases in which the term *wills* is mentioned in the key line or other levels of the hierarchy, even if the headnotes are not classified under topic 409. To narrow your search, add search terms; for example, type **to(409) /p "condition subsequent"**.

Using the West Key Number Digest (Custom Digest)

The West Key Number Digest, also called the Custom Digest, contains the complete topic and key number outline used by West attorney-editors to classify headnotes. The West Key Number Digest helps you identify topic and key numbers related to your issue and retrieve cases with headnotes classified under those topic and key numbers.

To access the West Key Number Digest, click **Key Numbers** at the top of any page, then click **West Key Number Digest Outline** under *Browse Key Numbers*. (Alternatively, click **Custom Digest** at a case law database Search page.) To browse the digest, click the plus (+) and minus (–) symbols.

In addition to browsing the West Key Number Digest for relevant topic and key numbers, you can also search for them using the Search for Key Numbers feature.

To use the Search for Key Numbers feature, complete these steps:

1. Click **Key Numbers** at the top of any page. A page is displayed that contains the *Search for Key Numbers* text box.
2. Type your terms, e.g., **family and medical leave**, in the text box.
3. To change the jurisdiction from which you retrieve case headnotes, click **Change Jurisdiction**, then select the check boxes next to the jurisdictions you want and click **Done**.
4. Click **Search**. A list of topic and key numbers is displayed.
5. Click a topic and key number to view the headnotes classified under that topic and key number. Or select the check boxes next to one or more topic and key numbers and click **Search Selected** to view the headnotes classified under those topic and key numbers.

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