

University of Maryland School of Law
Thurgood Marshall Law Library Guide to Legal Research
2011 – 2012

Prepared 2011 by the Thurgood Marshall Law Library Instructional Group. All rights reserved.
For permission to reprint any part of this work, contact the administration of the Thurgood
Marshall Law Library.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO LEGAL AUTHORITIES AND LEGAL RESEARCH

Introduction

How does legal research differ from research in other contexts?

Types of legal authorities

Relationship between statutory law and case law

The universe of choices for legal research

The legal research process

Understanding citations to basic primary sources

CHAPTER 2

ELECTRONIC RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

Electronic research basics

Boolean searching

Field and segment searching

Lexis and Westlaw basics

Westlaw: organization of materials

Lexis: organization of materials

Selecting databases/sources

Composing Lexis and Westlaw searches

Quick tips for composing online searches

Internet research

Strategies for Internet research

CHAPTER 3

BACKGROUND RESEARCH USING SECONDARY SOURCES

Secondary sources: background

Using legal periodicals

Using legal encyclopedias

Using treatises, hornbooks, and nutshells

Using Restatements

Using American Law Reports

Using litigation sources
Tips for using secondary sources
Practice materials and form books
Preparing for trial: selected environmental sources
Highlights of Bluebook form for secondary sources

CHAPTER 4 STATUTORY LAW RESEARCH

Statutory law: background
Terminology used in statutory research
Sources for statutory research
Locating periodical articles by statute citations
Highlights of Bluebook form for statutes

CHAPTER 5 RESEARCHING LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

Getting started
Researching federal legislative history
Researching Maryland legislative history

CHAPTER 6 ADMINISTRATIVE LAW RESEARCH

Strategies for researching administrative materials
Using looseleaf services: basic pointers

CHAPTER 7 CASE LAW RESEARCH

Case law: background
Court hierarchies and the appellate process
Print sources for case law research
Electronic sources for case law research
Locating periodical articles by case name
Citators: function and formats
Print citators
Electronic citators
Citation format for cases
Highlights of Bluebook form for cases

CHAPTER 8

RESEARCHING A STATE LAW PROBLEM

- The legal research process: state law sources
- Identifying state court structure and reporters
- Using secondary sources for state law problems
- Using state annotated codes in print
- State and regional case law resources
- Using West digests to locate state court cases
- Using American Law Reports to locate state court cases
- Tips for selecting state law databases
- Strategies for researching a state law problem
- Highlights of Bluebook form for state law sources

CHAPTER 9

RESEARCHING A MARYLAND LAW PROBLEM

- Maryland code
- Maryland session laws
- Maryland local law
- Retrospective Maryland statute searching
- Baltimore City materials
- Maryland administrative materials
- Maryland case law
- Maryland practice materials

CHAPTER 10

RESEARCHING A FEDERAL LAW PROBLEM

- The legal research process: federal law sources
- Federal court system
- Using secondary sources for federal law problems
- Federal codes
- Using federal annotated codes
- Federal session laws
- Locating and updating federal administrative materials
- Using the Federal Practice Digest
- Using American Law Reports Federal
- Sources for federal case law research
- Federal court rules and practice materials
- Strategies for researching a federal law problem
- Highlights of Bluebook form for federal administrative sources
- Highlights of Bluebook form for federal cases
- Highlights of Bluebook form for federal statutes

CHAPTER 11
FOREIGN AND INTERNATIONAL LAW RESEARCH

Terminology used in researching international law
Selected sources for researching United States Treaties
Locating implementing laws and regulations and judicial interpretations
Selected sources for researching world treaties
Strategies for researching international law
Basic foreign law research
Selected sources for researching European Community law

CHAPTER 12
ORGANIZING RESEARCH PROJECTS AND PRESENTING RESULTS

Comments on the research process
Strategies for organizing research projects
Presenting research results to a supervisor
Considerations when writing informal opinion letters to clients