

LEGAL RESEARCH MINI-PLAYBOOK



I have a legal issue to research, what do I do?

The answer depends on what, if anything, you have to start with?

I HAVE NOTHING



SECONDARY SOURCES

1. Don't remake wheel, read for background, context, and to find relevant **STATUTES & CASES**.
2. Treatises/Practitioner materials best, Legal Encyclopedia good.
3. Remember Westlaw and Lexis have *different* sources, try both.
4. Remember some are only in print, go to the library. Ask.



I HAVE A STATUTE SECTION



GO TO ANNOTATED CODE

1. Check statutory scheme (table of contents) for bigger picture, related "definitions" sections, etc.
2. In McKinney's (NY) read Practice Commentaries immediately after statute for background, context, & related statutes, cases, etc.
3. Look for selected cases in Notes of Decisions.
4. Possible secondary sources in Context & Analysis.
5. Use Citing References (or Shepard's) to locate and search (a) pool of all cases and (b) secondary sources citing the statute.



READ SECONDARY SOURCES

I HAVE A CASE



READ & FIND MORE

1. Cases cited in your case
2. Subsequent cases that cite your case (Shepard's or Citing References)
3. Headnotes / Topic & Key numbers.
4. Use Citing References (or Shepard's) to locate and search (a) pool of all other cases and (b) secondary sources citing your case.



READ SECONDARY SOURCES

FINALLY, WHEN AM I DONE?

When you start running into the same cases in all the different places.