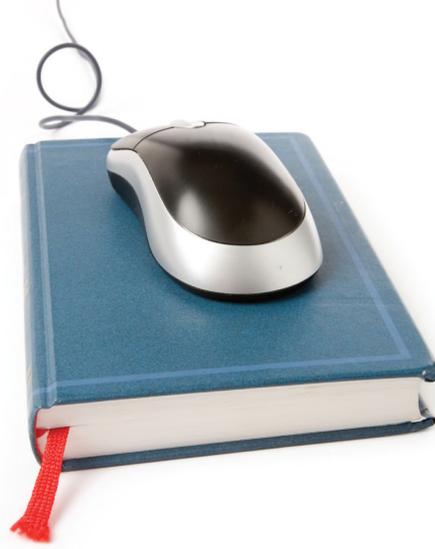


# Legal research: Did you know?



WHEN YOU'RE GIVEN A RESEARCH TASK, PLUGGING IN THE FIRST SEARCH TERMS THAT COME TO MIND INTO A SEARCH ENGINE MAY BRING UP SOME RESULTS, BUT WHAT ARE YOU MISSING OUT ON? HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT . . .

## GREAT RESOURCES

[www.austlii.edu.au](http://www.austlii.edu.au)  
[www.austlii.edu.au/lawcite](http://www.austlii.edu.au/lawcite)  
[www.comlaw.gov.au](http://www.comlaw.gov.au)  
[www.legislation.vic.gov.au](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au)  
[www.liv.asn.au/Library](http://www.liv.asn.au/Library)

## WANT MORE INFORMATION?

The LIV Library offers training sessions on both freely available and subscription based resources including:

- Legislation workshops
- Case law workshops
- One-to-one research refreshers

For more information contact [library@liv.asn.au](mailto:library@liv.asn.au) or ph 9607 9364.

## DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION?

You've been given a point of law to research. Is the question worded in a way that you understand? If not, you need to go back to the person who gave you the instructions (or a less scary mentor in your workplace) and have them explain it clearly.

Underline or highlight the important words – these will make up your search strategy. If you can't get a clear explanation from a work colleague, resources like the *Laws of Australia* (either the Thomson or Butterworths product will do) provide concise overviews of legal terms and subjects.

## SYNONYMS

If you just Google the first terms that come to mind, you may well miss out on key material on the subject. You need to think like a thesaurus and try to capture all the possible words that might fit your criteria.

You're looking for cases on car accidents and drink driving. Let's think about alternative search terms: drunk, drink or intoxicated; inebriated; car, motor vehicle or automobile.

## VARIATIONS OF WORDS

Let's go one step further. Use truncation (for most databases this is an asterisk) to replace letters. So, "drunk\*" will pick up both drunk and drunken, while "drink\*" will pick up drink and drinking.

## OTHER THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

If you're using legal jargon, are there layman's terms that could equally apply (and vice versa)?

Could your term have been abbreviated?

If you're searching in other jurisdictions, such as the United States, consider whether they use different spelling (such as judgement instead of judgment).

## MAKE USE OF THE BEST RESOURCES

If you want to use Wikipedia to look up the history of Chupa Chups or Dr Who, knock yourself out. It is not an appropriate resource for authoritative legal information.

For freely available case law, AustLII is fantastic. What's even better is the relatively new feature LawCite, a free case base-style search engine that's available from the AustLII homepage. LawCite provides a variety of search fields, so that even if you don't know all the details of the case you're after (such as the parties), you can fill in as many details as possible (judge name, court, etc).

However, AustLII is not the best resource for legislation. To ensure you're looking at the most up-to-date version of an Act, it's imperative you utilise the most reliable, authoritative sites: Comlaw for commonwealth legislation and the Victorian (or other state and territory) legislation site. There you'll be guaranteed you're accessing the most current version of the legislation.

## DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE ADVANCED SEARCH

It may seem easier to type your keywords into the first search box that appears, but you'll end up spending longer scrolling through a bunch of irrelevant results. It's best to use any advanced search option available to limit your result by date, jurisdiction, court and so on.

## GO OLD SCHOOL AND PICK UP A BOOK

Contrary to popular belief, not everything is available online. Law is a relatively old-fashioned profession and in many respects texts and loose-leaf services still hold an important role in legal research.

## WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, ASK A LIBRARIAN

Sweep aside lurking memories of your dragon-lady school librarian. Law librarians (particularly those delightful souls at the LIV library) are a font of information and are more than happy to point you in the right direction. ●