

***SUMMER
LEGAL
RESEARCH***

LOGISTICS

- Legal.research@law.cuny.edu
- Summer access to Westlaw, Lexis, Bloomberg – see summer library services memo.
- Summer access to other CUNY Law databases are the same.

TIP 1

BE A PRO & BE PREPARED

- Be on time.
- Always have something to write with and write on.
- Take Notes.
- Call of the Question: What are you actually being asked to do?

TIP 2

DEADLINE & DELIVERABLE?

- How are you reporting back to them? A check-in, an email, a memo?
- When is it due? Do not be late, or if you have to be late, let them know as early as possible.

TIP 3

THE GOLDEN QUESTION

Is there any place you would suggest I start with this research?

TIP 4

WHEN YOU LEAVE THAT OFFICE

- Do NOT run and search for cases.
- Do NOT run and search for cases.
- Legal Research Mini-Playbook
- Do NOT run and search for cases.

TIP 5

IF NEEDED, RESEARCH HOW TO RESEARCH

- Unfamiliar area of law? The law of Missouri? The law of Suriname? California Legislative history? Administrative decisions from the Department of Labor?
- Google the topic and “legal research guide”

TIP 6
IF YOU HAVE NOTHING, START WITH
SECONDARY SOURCES

- What area of law? Family Law? Criminal?
What jurisdiction? State or federal?
- Browse to the shelf of books online.
Treatises best, encyclopedias ok.
- Law review articles? Meh. Unless you are
RA, then Law review articles all day.

TIP 7

STATUTE? GO TO ANNOTATED CODE

- Remember check the statutory scheme – table of contents – is there a definitions section, for example?
- In Westlaw, scroll down to bottom to find “Practice Commentaries” – a built-in secondary source.
- Notes of Decisions (curated by attorneys)
- Citing References (or Shepards) for citing cases or to circle back to secondary sources.

TIP 8

HAVE A CASE, FIND MORE

- Cases cited in the case
- Subsequent cases citing the case (Citing References or Shepards)
- Circle back to secondary sources discussing the case (Citing References or Shepards)

TIP 9

LEGAL ISSUE v. FACTUAL ISSUE

- Focus on what the legal issue is first. What is the standard (is it statutory, regulatory, judge-created test?)
- Then look to examples with similar or analogous facts applying that standard.
- If you focus too early on searching for identical cases, spoiler alert: there may not be any.

TIP 10

AM I EVER GONNA BE DONE?

- Don't wait to start writing it up, it will help you work through it and identify holes.
- General rule: if you're coming at it from different angles and running into the same sources, you can start to feel you are done.
- Don't lose the fear.

TIP 11

BEFORE YOU TURN IT IN

- Proofread: print it out and read it.
- Shepardize//KeyCite major cases
- Bluebook – Fake it till you make it, but you have to learn to ride this bike.
- Print // Email // Deliver

TIP 12

FINALLY

- Legislative history? See if you need to first.
- 50 state survey? Run! But if you can't. . .
- See other examples on webpage.
- Questions or you're stuck? Reach out.