
§ 1.3**Finding Authority***Citations Lead to Authority*

A researcher or author of a legal document must be able to locate and refer to an authority in order to be able to use it. This is done through citations. A citation is a legal address. In the following pages, students will be asked to locate various citations in a law library. In later chapters, students will learn the form of a legal memorandum and the system of basic legal analysis. Authority, research, and writing are connected.

Authority

It is essential that a researcher understand the contents and basic functions of the books found in a law library or within online legal research services. For instance, secondary authority (non-law) is used mainly to locate and explain primary authority (law.)

**Research**

Research is the skill used to locate relevant authority, both primary and secondary. An encyclopedia is an excellent example of secondary authority. The purpose of a legal encyclopedia is to provide basic explanations of most areas of law. Like most forms of secondary authority, encyclopedias provide citations that lead the researcher to the actual law (primary authority), such as cases and statutes.

**Writing**

The purpose of most legal research is to support arguments in legal documents, such as briefs or motions. As we will see later, briefs are documents that attempt to persuade the court to rule in favor of one side or the other. The court doesn't care what an attorney thinks or what a paralegal thinks. The court only really pays attention to one thing: the law.