

## § 1.4

## Locating a Case with a Citation

### *The Address of the Case*

Case law means court opinions. Court opinions are considered common law, meaning they arise from a factual dispute in which the outcome has been determined by a judge. How does a paralegal locate case law? That depends on the information the paralegal has been provided.

#### IF THE PARALEGAL IS PROVIDED WITH A CITATION

A citation is a legal address. Almost any legal writing can be cited, including cases. This is a typical citation:

*Canino v. New York News*, 475 A.2d 528 (N.J. 1984)

**Title:** *Canino v. New York News* is the name of the case. The title is always either italicized or underlined.

**Volume:** **475** is the volume number.

**Publication:** **A.2d** stands for Atlantic Reporter, second series. Reporters (and reports) are collections of opinions. In this case, we have a regional reporter, collecting opinions from appellate-level courts within the Atlantic Region.

**Page:** **528** is the page number.

**Court:** **N.J.** stands for the Supreme Court of New Jersey, the court that authored the opinion.

**Year:** **1984** is the year the opinion was written.

All one needs to find a case is the *publication*, the *volume* number, and the *page* number. In the above example, find the publication (*Atlantic Reporter, 2d series*), turn to the volume (*475*), and finally locate the page where the case begins (*528*). But what if the paralegal does not have a citation yet? Just a legal question, which is usually called an issue?

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**IF THE PARALEGAL HAS ONLY A LEGAL ISSUE**

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There are many publications that help the researcher locate cases, statutes, and other forms of authority.

Examples include legal encyclopedias, digests, annotations, and form books. Locating cases with an issue will be taught later. For now, we will focus on finding a case using a citation.

**ASSIGNMENT § 1.4 | USE THESE CITATIONS FOR THE FOLLOWING ASSIGNMENTS**

- Martinez v. State*, 961 P.2d 752 (Nev. 1998)
- Ward v. State*, 1 S.W.3d 1 (Ark. 1999)
- U.S. v. Barrow*, 118 F.3d 482 (6th Cir. 1997)
- Arizona v. Roberson*, 486 U.S. 675 (1988)

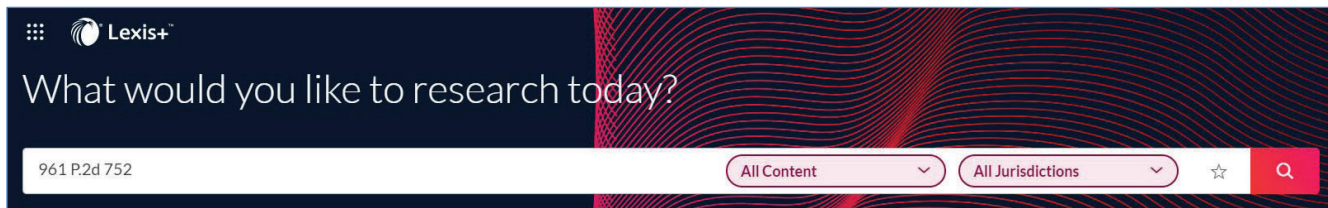
**ASSIGNMENT § 1.4(A) | ONLINE CASE LAW RESEARCH USING WESTLAW**

1. Login to *Westlaw* at *westlaw.com*
2. In the *Search Query Text Box* at the top of the page, type the citation (even just the volume number, publication, and page number will be sufficient, such as: 961 P.2d 752)
3. Click *Search*.



**ASSIGNMENT § 1.4(B) | ONLINE CASE LAW RESEARCH USING LEXIS**

1. Login to *Lexis* at *lexis.com*
2. In the Search Query Bar at the top of the page, type all or part of the desired citation, such as: 961 P.2d 752 (no title or year is required).
3. Click *Search*.

**ASSIGNMENT § 1.4(C) | CASE LAW RESEARCH USING THE LAW LIBRARY (OPTIONAL)**

*NOTE: All law library assignments are optional unless required by your instructor. However, when and if you are able to gain access to a law library it is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED that you use these assignments and exercises to become familiar with the books. It will make you a much better overall researcher, including online research.*

When visiting the law library, locate the above cases. You do not have to copy the case.

Instead, write down the first five words of the case that appear after the case caption.

1. Locate the publication (such as the Pacific Reporter, 3d Series)
2. Locate the volume indicated by the citation
3. Open the volume and turn to the page indicated by the citation

