

By broadening the number of terms, we have dramatically increased the chances of finding on-point material.

**On-point**

When researching, the object is to find material relevant to the issue being researched. This is often referred to as locating “on-point” authority, or authority that is “on all fours.”

**EXERCISE § 2.3 | CARTWHEELING**

You are researching the following topics. *Cartwheel* them below to better access an index or website.

interrogatories	
summary judgment	
slip and fall	
fatal car accident	
conflict of interest	
drug overdose	
husband-wife privilege	
plea bargain	
hospital	
gerrymander	

**§ 2.4**

**Accessing Law Books: The Index**

*The Old-School Way Still Applies*

This section is focused on books and publications in the law library but will also be helpful in developing the skill of query formulation used in online research. When researching in the law library,

the general rule is to start in the broadest index for any set of materials (with a couple of exceptions that will be addressed later). It is helpful to understand that indexes use a *hierarchical system*. This means that the index starts with a topic, then a subtopic, then a sub-subtopic, and so on. In this system, the sub-subtopic relates to the subtopic, which in turn relates to the topic.

### Index Signals

Beginning researchers are often confused by signals, which are just guides to lead the researcher to the appropriate point within the index. They act like signposts. The most common signals are:

*infra* or *ante*

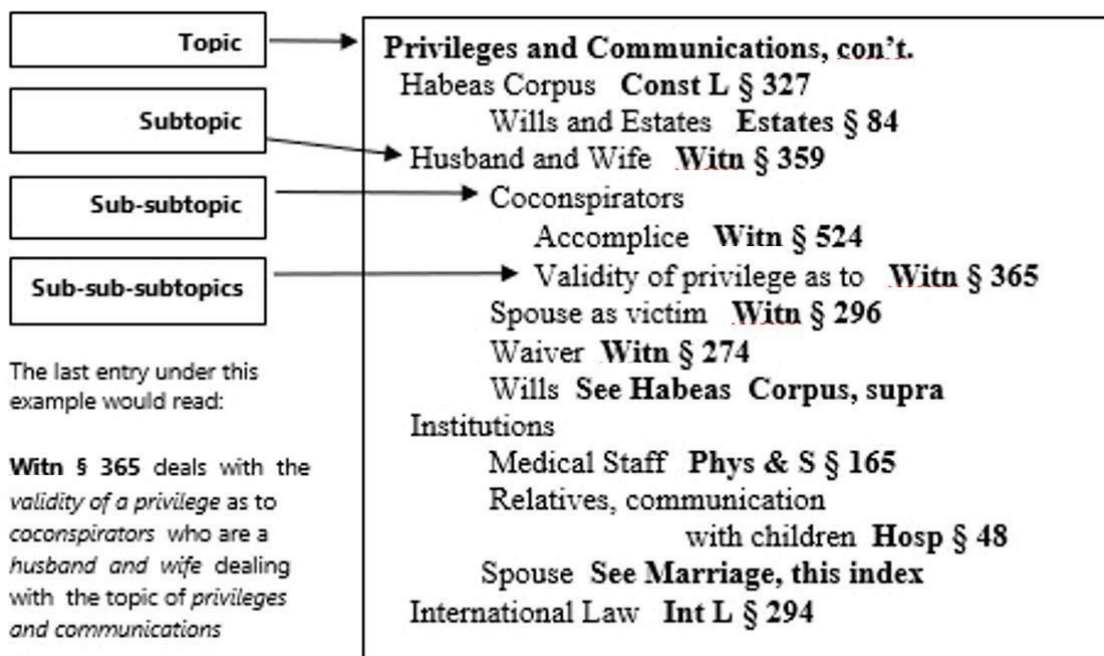
Look for your topic below, within the same heading.

*supra*

Look for your topic above, within the same heading.

*this index*

Look for the referenced topic as a general, broad topic within the same set of indexes.



The topic and section abbreviations in an index, such as in the above example of **Witn § 365**, always lead the researcher to the main volumes of the publication being researched. Also, every set of indexes has an *Abbreviation Table*, usually in the front of the book. Refer to that table if you are unsure of any abbreviation.