

# Using Westlaw for English law

This guide will show you how to use Westlaw to find cases, legislation and journal articles.

## Accessing Westlaw

Go to <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/library/resources-and-services/course-resource-help/law#westlaw>

Click on **How to access Westlaw** and follow the link and instructions.

You may be prompted for your student number and password.

The first time you access Westlaw you will be asked for your name and email address.

It is important you access Westlaw through the library website rather than by Googling 'Westlaw', otherwise you will not have access to the content we subscribe to.

The Westlaw homepage contains a simple search box with a blue bar along the top. This guide will describe using the options in the blue bar, but you can use the simple search box instead if you prefer.

Tip: You can return to the homepage from anywhere in Westlaw by clicking on the Westlaw Edge UK logo in the top left of any page

## How to find cases

From any Westlaw page click on **cases** at the top, then **cases search** to see a search page. You do not need to fill in all the search boxes. If you want to see some other search options click on **more options**.

Using the **cases search** page you can do any of the following:

Search by the <b>parties</b> in the case	e.g. Donoghue v Stevenson
Search by <b>citation</b> . NB: brackets and full stops are optional	e.g. [1967] 1 WLR 716
Search by topic or theme in the <b>free text</b> field	e.g. "joint enterprise". Use speech marks to find the words together in a phrase

If you get a long list of results, you can use the filters down the left hand side of the results screen to narrow down your search.

At the top of your search results, you can change how the results are sorted: you can have either the most relevant results or the most recent results at the top.

To read a case, simply click on the link in the results list.

If you prefer to browse rather than search, click on the **cases** tab at the top of the screen, and then **choose law reports**. Pick the law report you are interested in and click through until you reach the case you need.

## How to find legislation / statutes

From any Westlaw page click on **legislation** at the top, then **legislation search** to see a search page. You do not need to fill in all the search boxes. If you want to see some other search options click on **more options**.

Using the **legislation search** page you can:

Search by the <b>title</b> of the Act or SI	e.g. Equality Act 2010
Search by topic or theme in the <b>free text</b> field	e.g. "houses in multiple occupation". Use speech marks to find the words together in a phrase

If you want to jump straight to a particular section of an Act, choose **section** from the **provision number** drop down and put the section number in the box next to it.

If you get a long list of results, you can use the filters down the left hand side of the results to narrow down your search. You can also limit your results to just Acts or just Statutory Instruments this way.

At the top of your search results, you can change how the results are sorted: you can have either the most relevant results or the most recent results at the top.

To read a document, simply click on the link in the results list.

If you didn't use the **provision number** box then you will see an overview of the whole Act. You can quickly see which sections are currently in force (look for the green ticks). Click on the title of any section to read it.

## How to find journal articles

From any Westlaw click on **journals** at the top, then **journals search** to see a search page. You do not need to fill in all the search boxes. If you want to see some other search options click on **more options**.

You can also browse for journal articles by clicking on **journals** then **publications**. Doing this allows you to choose a journal and see what articles have been published in it this year (or earlier).

If you get a lot of search results, you can use the filters down the left hand side of the screen to refine the list. Alternatively, you may want to go back to your search and use more precise search terms or add extra search terms.

As well as full text articles, Westlaw also provides abstracts (i.e. short summaries) of some other articles. If you prefer, you can limit your search results to full text articles only. Down the left of the results, click **availability** then tick **full text available**.

If you find an abstract of an article that you'd like to find the full text of, try searching for the title of the article in LibrarySearch or Lexis+. Advice about finding articles when you have a reference can be found in the *Finding a journal article* help guide (available from <https://radar.brookes.ac.uk/radar/items/559c4f41-a60a-409c-9905-ff512a24537d/1/>)

## Searching tips

Westlaw contains *a lot* of material – this is what makes it such a valuable resource for law. However, this does mean you can get a large number of search results when you're exploring a topic. Knowing how to combine search words with connectors can help you get a relevant and focused list of results. Any of these can be used on any Westlaw search page:

<b>or</b> to find alternatives	<b>refugee or migrant</b>
<b>and</b> to find all terms	<b>easement and light and owner</b>
<b>%</b> (meaning 'not' to exclude a term	<b>equality % race</b>
quotation marks for a phrase	<b>"mens rea"</b>
<b>/n</b> to specify proximity	<b>medical /5 negligence</b> (words occur within 5 words of each other)
<b>/s</b> for words in the same sentence	<b>inchoate /s offence</b>
<b>/p</b> for words in the same paragraph	<b>inchoate /p offence</b>
<b>!</b> to find variants	<b>bank!</b> (finds <i>bank, banks, banker, banking</i> etc.)

Click on **show terms and connectors** on any search page to see a handy reminder of these shortcuts.

## Alerts, folders and saved searches

If you search for cases or journal articles on a particular topic, then you may want to know if anything new is published on that topic in the future. To avoid having to return to Westlaw and repeat the search, you can create an alert. This means Westlaw will email you if there are any new results.

At the top of any list of search results, click on the alarm bell icon, give your search a useful name and save it. Westlaw will then regularly repeat the search for you and email you when any new results are found. If you want to snooze or delete an alert, click on **alerts** at the top of Westlaw.

When you're reading a case, look for the alarm bell icon down the right-hand side. You can ask Westlaw to alert you by email if the case is appealed, cited by another case etc.

You can keep track of all of your research by saving documents into folders. You could have a folder for each module or assignment, to keep things organised. To add something to a folder, look for the folder icon to the right of any document on Westlaw. Click on **folders** at the top of the Westlaw to see all the documents in your folders.

### Getting help and finding out more

More online information can be found on the Law help pages, at [www.brookes.ac.uk/library/resources-and-services/course-resource-help/law](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/library/resources-and-services/course-resource-help/law)

If you need any help with finding or using library resources for law please contact **Charlie Brampton** (Academic Liaison Librarian) using the contact details below.

Email: [c.brampton@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:c.brampton@brookes.ac.uk)  
Tel: 01865 483077

Headington Library, JHB 112