

Using Westlaw for English law

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

Accessing Westlaw

Go to <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/library/subject-help/law/how-to-use-westlaw/> and click on the *Go to Westlaw* button near the top. You may be prompted for your student number and password.

Go to Westlaw

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 it otherwise you will not have access to the content we subscribe to.

The Westlaw homepage contains a simple search box and tabs along the top. This guide will describe using the tabs to search, 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 icon in the top left.

How to find cases

From the Westlaw homepage, click on the *cases* tab to see a search page. You do not need to fill in all the fields! If you want to see other search options (e.g. to specify a date range or the name of the judge) click on *more options*

Using the case search page you can do any of the following:

Search by the parties in the case	e.g. Donoghue v Stevenson
Search by citation . NB: brackets and full stops are optional	e.g. [1967] 1 WLR 716
Search by topic or theme in the free text 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.

WWW.BROOKES.AC.UK/LIBRARY

At the top right 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. You can also choose how much detail you want in the results list. If you pick 'most detail' you can see how and where your search words are used in the case. To read a document, simply click on the link in the results list.

If you prefer to browse rather than search, click on *law reports* on the horizontal bar below the *cases* tab. Pick the law report you are interested in and then just keep narrowing it down until you reach the case you need.

How to find legislation

From the Westlaw homepage, click on the *legislation* tab to see a search form. You do not need to fill in all the fields! If you want other search options (e.g. to access historic legislation) click on *more options*.

Using the simple search form you can do any of the following:

Search by the title of the Act or SI	e.g. Equality Act 2010
Search by topic or theme in the free text 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, select 'section' in the *provision number* drop down box 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 screen to narrow down your search. You can also limit your results to just Acts or just Statutory Instruments this way.

At the top right 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. You can also choose how much detail you want in the results list. If you pick 'most detail' you can see how and where your search words are used in the case. 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 of the whole Act. You can quickly see which sections are currently in force (look for the green ticks). From this overview screen you can select individual sections before clicking on the print/download/email icons. You can click on the title of any section in order to read it.

How to find journal articles

From the Westlaw homepage, click on the *journals* tab to see a search form. If you want to see additional options, such as searching for articles that refer to a particular case, click on *more options*.

You can also browse for journal articles by clicking on *publications* above the search box. If you have the reference to a particular article that you know is on Westlaw, then this may be quicker than using the search form.

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 and citation information) of a large range of other articles. If you prefer, you can limit your search results to full text articles only by ticking the 'full text available' box on the left hand side of the results screen.

If you find an abstract of an article that you'd like to find the full text of, just treat it like an article on your reading list. 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 the most appropriate list of results. These connectors will work anywhere in Westlaw UK:

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

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 remember to return to Westlaw and repeat the search, you can create an alert. At the top of the results page, click on the alarm bell icon, give your search a 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 your folders in one place.

Getting help and finding out more

More online information can be found on the Law help pages, at www.brookes.ac.uk/library/subject-help/law

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

Email: c.brampton@brookes.ac.uk
Tel: 01865 483077

Headington Library, JHB 310 (Level 3, Zone C)
Oxford Brookes University.