



DATABASE NAVIGATION

Accessing Databases

- Go to the website for the campus library (<https://foresternet.lakeforest.edu/academic-resources/library>).
- Follow the yellow link that says “Donnelly and Lee Library.”
- Click on “Research.”
- Click on “A-Z Databases” in the red dropdown menu.
- Select the database you would like to access.

PsycInfo: Show Me the Data

- You can use PsycInfo to find empirical journal articles, books, newspaper stories, and other research to guide your legislation.
- Start by typing a term into the **search box**.
 - Entering a broad term (i.e., “gun violence”) will generate thousands of results, many of which will be unrelated to your specific topic.
 - Filter the results by using *operators*.
 - There are two search boxes underneath the main one, and they can be toggled between “AND,” “OR,” + “NOT.”
 - **AND** = only produces results that mention your two search terms together (i.e., “gun violence AND red flag laws”).
 - **OR** = in contrast to AND, this tool is used to expand the number of results generated by providing an approximate synonym for what you are looking for (i.e., “guns OR firearms”).
 - **NOT** = used to exclude certain results. For example, if you wanted to find data about pistol usage, you might enter “pistol NOT rifle.” This would generate articles that mention the word “pistol” but not “rifle.” However, it is

important to note that this would also exclude articles that focus on pistols but happen to mention the word “rifle” (even though it is unrelated to the key findings). Think carefully before applying an operator to ensure that you are not missing relevant research.

- You can use multiple operators in the same search, hence the two search boxes. If you want to use more, click the + button to the bottom right.
- You can also type the operators directly into the main search box instead of using the boxes with toggling options.
- **Filtering Options: Far Left Side.** Applying filters reduces the number of articles that the search generates, thereby decreasing the amount of time you must spend eliminating irrelevant results.
 - *Date of Publication.* Drag the two blue boxes on the sliding bar to select the range of publication years that you would like to include. You might use this to look for articles that were published after a certain law was passed, or if you only want to include recent research (i.e., you can set the range to only include articles published in the last five or ten years).
 - *Source Type.* Select which kinds of sources you would like to include. For instance, if you are only looking for empirical research articles, check the “academic journals” box and leave the other options blank.
- **Click on the article you want to view (article titles appear in red).**
 - *Abstract.* An abstract is a paragraph that provides a brief overview of the article you clicked on. You can also view this from the main results page by hovering over the magnifying glass image near the article title.
 - *Availability.* If you read the abstract and decide that the article might relate to your research topic, look to the left-

hand side of the page to see if the school has access to that publication.

- Some articles are available as PDF documents, in which case a link saying “PDF Full Text” appears.
 - If there is no PDF Full Text option, click the “Check Lake Forest College” option.
 - This will direct you to a new page. Some articles can be accessed online instead of directly through the school, in which case “available online” will appear in green and hyperlinks will be provided. Others must be requested through the library, requiring you to enter your LFC credentials and place a request. The library will email a copy of the article to you within a few days.
- **Cite.** To cite an article, click on the “cite” button in the right toolbar, choose your desired format (MLA, APA, etc.), and then copy it into your references page. NOTE: These citations are usually, *but not always*, correct. Check the accuracy of the citations by comparing them with the format listed on www.purdueowl.com.

Nexis Uni: Show Me the Law

- Nexis provides access to cases so that you can see what the law says about a particular subject.
- It is easiest to use Nexis to search for a case that you have already encountered during your research (*i.e.*, you know its name).
- Look for the **Guided Search** option below the main search box.
- Under “**What Are You Looking For?**”, select “**Cases.**”
- Select whether your case was decided at the **federal** or **state** level.
 - Cases decided by the United States Supreme Court are federal.

- Enter the **full name of the case** into the search box (for example, *District of Columbia v. Heller*).
- **Select the correct case.** Cases are hyperlinked in blue.
 - The same case may be listed multiple times if it was decided at multiple levels of the judiciary. Cases rise through the court system when the losing party appeals a decision, and certain cases can move back and forth between federal and state courts.
 - Under the blue hyperlink, the court which issued that specific decision is written in gray.
- **Shepard's Signal.** The Shepard's Signal appears by the case name in the list of results or on the right-hand side when you click on the case. The Shepard Signal indicates whether a case is still "good law" or has since been overturned by a higher court, overridden by legislation, or otherwise altered.
 - *Watch for the red stop sign.* This indicates that the case is now bad law. If you click on the Shepard's Signal, it will explain why and provide links to controlling cases.
- **Case Summary.** The case summary provides a quick overview of the decision, including the key holdings and procedural posture (case history). However, it was not written by the court in question. Rather, it was written by other lawyers who read the opinion and wrote a summary for the Nexis database. As such, the terminology used therein should NOT be cited as originating from the court.
- **Headnotes.** Headnotes are actual quotations from the court, but they are cherry-picked from various sections of the opinion by reviewing lawyers who deem them to be particularly notable. Thus, it is important to consider the context in which those quotations arose. To find where the headnote appears in the actual opinion, click on the blue HN_ hyperlink to the upper left.
- **Opinion.** This contains the court's decision and reasoning.

- Page numbers are bolded and appear in brackets with an asterisk. [***574**]
- For appellate courts that have multiple presiding judges (like the United States Supreme Court), watch for when the majority opinion switches to a concurrence or dissent.
- **Cite.** Avoid the “Export Citation” feature and cite by hand. Scroll to the top of the page and find the name of the case in bold, followed by a series of numbers and letters.
- For Supreme Court cases, cite as follows:
 - The name of the case in italics
 - Comma
 - The volume of the United States Reports that the case appears in
 - U.S. (stands for the United States Reports)
 - The page of the Reports that the case begins on
 - The year the case was decided in parentheses (appears below the case name in gray lettering)
- The final product will look like: *District of Columbia v. Heller*, 554 U.S. 570 (2008).