

## Legal Encyclopedias

### What are legal encyclopedias?

Legal encyclopedias cover a wide range of topics that are arranged alphabetically. Within each topic, the discussion is arranged by sub-topics according to the legal principles involved. Footnotes provide excerpts from judicial decisions and statutes. References are found to A.L.R. annotations, West Topic and Key Numbers, and subjects within the A.L.R. Digests. Further references are given to *Am. Jur. Proof of Facts*, *Am. Jur. Trials*, *Am. Jur. Pleading and Practice Forms*, and *Am. Jur. Legal Forms 2d*.

### Why are legal encyclopedias useful?

Legal encyclopedias provide broad coverage of American law including state and federal law. They may be used to locate cases which support specific legal points. Unlike law reviews, they do not critique the law, and unlike Restatements they do not suggest legal reform.

It is helpful to use legal encyclopedias at the beginning of a research project in order to obtain a broad overview of the area of law. You can easily move from sub-topic to sub-topic or to related areas of the law.

A state or specialized encyclopedia may have more credibility than *Am. Jur. 2d* or *C.J.S.* The text may be more detailed, and there may be more pertinent references. State encyclopedias may be quite useful in their treatment of jurisdictionally specific topics. They provide an overview of locally accepted doctrines and include extensive footnotes to primary sources.

### How do you research in encyclopedias?

There are two ways of locating material in an encyclopedia: the index and the topic list. Use the index volumes including the annual index supplement which can be found at the end of the set. Look up alternative terms, refer to cross-references, and read through entries and sub-entries. When you have found the appropriate topic, examine the more detailed subject index at the back of the volume containing that topic to find the appropriate section.

You may also locate pertinent material through the topic list. *Am. Jur. 2d* lists its topics in the Table of Abbreviations at the front of each index volume. In *C.J.S.*, topics appear as the List of Titles at the beginning of each volume as well as the Abbreviations of Titles in the index volume. Once you have decided upon a topic, look in the volume containing that topic for a broad table of contents, followed by a more specific table of contents arranged by section. This provides an overview of the organization of the chapter, and you may be able to select the appropriate section from the arrangement of the table of contents.

You may choose to begin your research with a citation to a federal statute, regulation, court rule, or uniform act. Look in the volume containing the Table of Statutes, Rules, and Regulations Cited for references to the topics and sections referencing these authorities. *Am. Jur. 2d* has a Popular Names Table in the final index volume.

Read the information in the main volume and update it by finding the same topic and section in the pocket supplement.

Both *C.J.S.* and *Am. Jur. 2d* provide references to West's Topic and Key Numbers that may be used in West Digests or on Westlaw to locate headnotes from additional cases that may be relevant to your problem.

### **Features of legal encyclopedias.**

*American Jurisprudence*; a Modern Comprehensive Text Statement of American Law, State and Federal. 2d ed. Rochester, N.Y.: Lawyers Co-operative Pub. Co.; San Francisco : Bancroft-Whitney Co., 1962 – v. (KF154 .A49 1962)

*Am. Jur. 2d* has traditionally been more selective in choosing cases to illustrate legal points than *C.J.S.* which use to provide citations to every relevant case. *Am. Jur. 2d* includes more extensive Research References for each topic. The text in *Am. Jur. 2d* is arranged by section in outline format. *Am. Jur. 2d* has a New Topic Service Binder that introduces new topics into the set in a timely manner without having to republish volumes. *Am. Jur. 2d* focuses slightly more on federal statutes, federal rules, and Uniform and Model Laws than *C.J.S.* The *Am. Jur. 2d Desk Book* includes facts, charts, tables, documents, and statistics.

*Corpus Juris Secundum* : a complete restatement of the entire American law as developed by all reported cases. St. Paul, Minn. : West Pub. Co., 1936- v. (KF154 .C66)

*C.J.S.* initially aimed to provide a complete restatement of the entire body of American Law. Until the 1980's, it claimed to cite all published case law in its discussion of legal topics. Since then, *C.J.S.* has narrowed its focus to become a contemporary statement of American law as derived from reported cases and statutes. One can access *C.J.S.* using a citation to it found in one of West's other publications, or one can use the General Index at the end of the set and the more specific topical index found at the back of each volume. If a volume has been recompiled, the topical index found in the back of the recompiled volume must be used, because the references to that topic in the General Index have been rendered obsolete. Most *C.J.S.* volumes also include definitions of important terms and legal maxims as separate entries. In *C.J.S.*, general rules of law are summarized in "Black Letter" headings and are expanded upon in the subsequent text which is arranged according to section in outline format. *C.J.S.* provides a multi-volume Table of Cases. Footnote references are arranged hierarchically by federal court then alphabetically by state.

Strong, John M. *Strong's North Carolina Index*, 4th. St. Paul.: Minn.: Thomson West Pub. Co., 1989- v. (KFN7445.1 .S8 1989)

*Strong's North Carolina Index 4<sup>th</sup>* is the North Carolina legal encyclopedia. It provides a topical summary of North Carolina cases and statutes in order to describe current North Carolina law. North Carolina cases and statutes are cited as authority in the footnotes to each section.

In order to determine the pertinent topic and section, check the General Index or review the table of contents at the beginning of each topic to narrow your search to a specific section. You should also read the scope note and treated elsewhere sections at the beginning of each topic in order to understand the coverage of the topic that you have selected.

The research references found at the beginning of each topic and section often provide citations to federal and N.C. statutes. The research references may also refer to *Am. Jur. 2d*, A.L.R. Digest and A.L.R. Index topics, *Am. Jur. Legal Forms 2d*, *Am. Jur. Pleading and Practice Forms*, and West Topic and Key Numbers. A National Background feature added to every section refers to comparable national law as contained in *Am. Jur. 2d*.

You should update your research by checking the pocket supplement and Quarterly Cumulative Supplement.

The set includes separate volumes: Table of Laws and Rules, Table of Cases, and Words and Phrases. The Code Research Guide is arranged by article and section of the North Carolina Constitution, by chapter and section of the General Statutes of North Carolina, and by court rule number. It provides references to *Strong's NC Index 4th*, *Am. Jur. 2d*, *Am. Jur. Proof of Facts*, *United States Code Service*, *Federal Procedure, L. Ed.*, *Am. Jur. Pleading and Practice Forms, Rev.*, *Am. Jur. Legal Forms 2d*, and *Federal Procedural Forms, L. Ed.* Under the sub-heading, "annotations", are references to the A.L.R. series and *L. Ed. 2d*. The *North Carolina Index 4th Desk Book* is a loose-leaf binder containing governmental and historical matters, courts and court rules, statutes and regulations, statistical matter, and research and practice aids. Selected information for other states and county statistics are included. The *Strong's North Carolina Index Archive* provides coverage of cases that do not appear in *North Carolina Index 4th* because of their age. Cases are included retrospectively to 1778. *North Carolina Index Archive* has the same articles, scope, and outline as *North Carolina Index 4th*.

*West's Encyclopedia of American Law*. 2d ed. Detroit: Thomson/Gale, c2005.  
13 v. (Reference KF154 .W47 2005)

WEAL explains American legal terms and concepts in everyday language. It covers a wide variety of persons, legal entities, and events that have shaped the American legal system. It contains nearly 5000 entries. Legal entries include definitions followed by an explanation of the terms. The Dictionary and Indexes volume includes a glossary of all the definitions from WEAL as well as an index to cases. A list of Further Readings follows most articles. In Focus Essays treat current controversial legal issues. WEAL entries provide citations to cases and statutes. Landmark cases are treated in an appendix volume, *Milestones in the Law*. Another volume provides the texts of primary documents.

### **How do you cite legal encyclopedias?**

Encyclopedias are cited most frequently for broad well-established points of law.

Refer to Bluebook Rule 15.7 (a).

70 *Am. Jur. 2d. What Constitutes Due Diligence* § 580 (2005).

80 *C.J.S. Necessity of Seaworthiness or Diligence* § 282 (2000).

### **Electronic legal encyclopedias.**

*American Jurisprudence 2d* is available on LexisNexis. However, only the table of contents and the text are included in the database.

*American Jurisprudence 2d* is available on Westlaw.

*Corpus Juris Secundum* is available in its entirety on Westlaw.

There are also special *C.J.S.* databases on Westlaw including:

CorpusJurisSecundum: Insurance

CorpusJurisSecundum: Internal Revenue

CorpusJurisSecundum: Patents, and

CorpusJurisSecundum: Workers' Compensation.

West's Encyclopedia of American Law [electronic resource]. 2d ed. Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, c2005. 13 v.

This is available on Gale Virtual Reference Library.

Wex [electronic resource]. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Law School, LII / Legal Information Institute. <http://topics.law.cornell.edu/wex>

Wex is a collaboratively-created, public-access law dictionary and encyclopedia. It contains approximately 130 articles on a variety of topics ranging from administrative law to workplace safety. The articles provide a basic introduction and overview of broad legal subjects and are written for law students and for attorneys needing an introduction to an unfamiliar area of law.