# Basic Research Steps

| Read & Plan | • Who (branches, types of law)  
|            | • What (terms, issues, citations)  
|            | • When (historical, current, future)  
|            | • Where (jurisdiction)  
|            | • Why (format, word limits, due date)  
|            | • How (billing, resources)  
|            | • Hypothesis?  
| Consult Secondary Sources | • Choose well. Ask for a recommendation, or use a research guide from a law library. Types include:  
|            | o Legal encyclopedias & ALRs  
|            | o Law reviews  
|            | o Treatises, Practice guides & Looseleaf services  
|            | • Always search at least two ways.  
|            | o Index  
|            | o Tables of cases or statutes  
|            | o Table of contents  
|            | o Full-text search  
| Read Primary Law | • Be attentive to mandatory vs. persuasive character of authorities.  
|            | • Focus on opinions cited frequently in secondary sources.  
|            | • Focus on opinions with similar facts.  
|            | • Focus on relevant opinions from your court or judge.  
| Update & Expand | • Expand to find additional sources.  
|            | o Cases - use Headnotes (citing cases & key numbers)  
|            | o Statutes - use Notes of Decisions  
|            | o Both - use citing references (limit by jurisdiction, etc.) & annotations (Context and Analysis)  
|            | • Verify authorities are still good law.  
|            | o Cases - Negative Treatment  
|            | o Statutes - check for Flags, check currency  
|            | • Do a final “clean-up search” — in the right database of cases.  
|            | o Big box: three good words (not too generic, not too specific)  
|            | o Advanced: templates have cheat sheet of common syntax  
| Repeat? | • Multiple legal issues to research?  
|            | • Discovered new terms, legal concepts, or issues?  

**UC Irvine Law Library**  
Contact a librarian for research tips!  
refdesk@law.uci.edu - (949) 824-6746 - libguides.law.uci.edu/summer