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Search Methods

There are three ways to search for cases on Fastcase: by **Keyword**, **Natural Language** or **Citation Lookup**.

Keyword Search (with Boolean operators)

Searching by **Keyword** using Boolean operators is the most powerful and flexible way to search for electronic information. It is also very easy to use. Fastcase uses the standard Boolean operators described below:

OPERATOR	EXAMPLE	DESCRIPTION
AND, &	copyright AND preemption	Results must contain <i>both</i> the words “copyright” and “preemption”
OR	landlord OR lessor	Results must contain <i>either</i> the word “landlord” <i>or</i> the word “lessor.” (They may contain both words).
NOT	vehicle NOT car	Results <i>must contain</i> the word “vehicle” but <i>must not contain</i> the word “car.”
w/3, /3	capital w/3 punishment	Results must contain the word “capital” within 3 words of the word “punishment.” The number indicates the maximum distance apart for the terms.
, !	litig	Results must contain some variation of the stem “litig” such as litigation, litigated, litigator, etc.
?	advis?r	The ? works as a single letter wildcard. Results must contain some variation of the word advis_r, such as adviser or advisor.
“ ”	“felony murder”	Results must contain the precise phrase “felony murder.”
()	(security OR pledge) AND assignment	Parentheses are used to define the order of operations when you use multiple Boolean operators.

Examples of the operators are also visible in the **Boolean Search Tips** box on the [Options](#) page.

Here are a few more things to keep in mind when you are performing a keyword search on Fastcase:

- Our search engine automatically omits certain common words (e.g., the, it, etc.) from your query. The search runs more efficiently without these common “noise” words.
- Fastcase uses an “implied AND” operator. This means that if there are multiple words in your search query and you do not specify a Boolean operator to connect them, Fastcase will treat your search as if you had placed an “AND” between each term. For example, if you type: summary judgment order, Fastcase will read that as: summary AND judgment AND order. Only cases containing ALL of those terms will be returned as results. If you would like to search for cases that contain the exact phrase “summary judgment order” (where those three words will appear in documents directly next to each other and in the same order), you should put the phrase in quotation marks.
- At the moment, our search engine will accommodate a search up to 500 words long. For the purposes of search length, a Boolean operator counts as a word.

Citation Lookup

- Pull up a case using the reporter citation by entering the reporter volume number, the reporter abbreviation, and the first page number.



Natural Language Search

Natural language searches are much less precise than **Keyword** searches, but they are a good place to start if you are new to legal research, or if you are delving into a new area of the law. There are a few important aspects of a **Natural Language Search** that you should bear in mind:

- The results are the cases with the highest relevance scores based on your overall mix of search terms.
 - Your search results may not contain each and every one of your search terms.
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