

## **TheLaw.net Equalizer 7.0 Tutorial: Advanced Search Techniques**

The sample searches in this tutorial, are anchored and driven by the Florida first degree murder statute. Watch how we build our individualized search path. First we find all opinions citing our statute. Next, we find all opinions citing our statute for the reason we care about. Then, using Equalizer's results analysis tools we pinpoint the leading case from among our results. Thereafter, we look for cases citing that case for the reason(s) we specify.

Accordingly, our search pivots. It goes from being all about the statute, to being all about our case. Along the way, we filter using terms provided by the text of the statute. That way we are sure to speak in the language of the law, avoiding the diffuse, ambiguous results and information overload that comes from word guessing.

If you decide to practice these searches, run them only in the Florida state database.

### **1) Lookup A Known Opinion**

**Instructions:** All you need is volume and starting page.

**Sample Search:** Enter **792 P.2d 801** and click *SEARCH*

**Results:** Your opinion pops up.

### **2) Lookup More Than One Known Opinion Simultaneously**

**Instructions:** To lookup multiple opinions in a single search separate each citation with a comma.

**Sample Search:** Enter **792 P.2d 801, 375 So.2d 836** and click *SEARCH*

**Results:** Both opinions pop up.

### **3) Find Any Opinions Citing Your Statute\***

**Instructions:** To find opinions citing the codified item of information driving your search, simply enter the number. In Florida, for example, when we search on murder or homicide we receive in excess of 10,000 opinions containing at least one reference to one of our search terms.

**Sample Search:** Check the Florida State Database, enter **782.04** and click *SEARCH*

**Results:** On this date we find 998 Florida state opinions that expressly cite the Florida first degree murder statute.

### **4) Find Any Opinions Citing More Than One Statute**

**Instructions:** To find opinions citing more than one statute, enter your two statute numbers separated by **and** or **&**.

**Sample Search:** Enter **782.04 & 782.02** and click *SEARCH*

**Results:** On this date we find 16 Florida state opinions that expressly cite the Florida first degree murder statute, together with the justifiable homicide statute.

### **5) Find Any Opinions Citing A Word**

**Sample Search:** Enter **murder** and click *SEARCH*

### **6) Find Any Opinions Citing More Than One Word**

**Instructions:** To find opinions citing more than one search term anywhere in the text of the case, separate the terms with **and** or the and symbol - **&**

**Sample Search:** Enter **murder & homicide** and click *SEARCH*

**Results:** Opinions containing at least one reference to each term pop up.

### **7) Find Any Opinions Citing A Phrase**

**Instructions:** Use quotations marks to find opinions containing a specific phrase.

**Sample Search:** Enter "**sexual battery**" and click *SEARCH*

**Results:** Opinions containing at least one reference to your phrase pop up.

### **8) Find Opinions Citing More Than One Phrase**

**Instructions:** To find opinions citing more than one search term anywhere in the text of the case, separate the terms with **and** or the and symbol - **&**

**Sample Search:** Enter "**first degree murder**" **&** "**sexual battery**" and click *SEARCH*

**Results:** Opinions containing at least one reference to each phrase pop up.

### **9) Find Opinions Including Alternative Number(s)/Word(s)/Phrase(s)**

**Instructions:** To find opinions containing alternative search terms anywhere in the text of the case, separate the terms with OR.

**Sample Search:** Enter "**sexual battery**" **or** "**sexual assault**" and click *SEARCH*

**Results:** Opinions containing at least one reference to one phrase pop up.

### **10) Find Any Opinions Citing Part Of A Word(s)/Phrase(s)**

**Instructions:** To truncate or to find derivative terms use an asterisk or exclamation mark.

**Sample Search:** Enter **employ\*** and click *SEARCH*

**Results:** This search finds opinions containing employ, employs, employed, employee, employment, etc.

### **11) Find The Opinion Citing Your Search Term(s) Most Often**

**Instructions:** The column on the far left on your results screen is captioned Relevance. This is an abbreviated way of saying search term frequency. Relevance speaks to the substance of the conversation regarding your search criteria. Results are sorted by Relevance by default. The higher percentage ranking an opinion receives, the more relevant it is in relation to other opinions matching your search criteria.

### **12) Find The Most Recent Opinion Matching Your Search Criteria**

**Instructions:** The column in the right half of your results screen is captioned *Decision Date*. To sort results by recency click the link captioned *Decision Date*. The most recent term to cite your case is not necessarily the most relevant. Appellate opinions typically resolves three to five questions of law. Your case may or may not be cited most often for your point of law. All this does is provide you with the most recent opinion to match your search criteria regardless of search term frequency or citation frequency.

### **13) Find The Most Cited Opinion Matching Your Search Criteria**

**Instructions:** The column on the far right of your screen is captioned *Citetrak Entire Database*. Viewed vertically, a series of numeric hyperlink appear. Each numeric hyperlink tells you in the first instance, whether an opinion has been cited. More than half of all published opinions have never been cited. Accordingly, more often than not the numeric hyperlink assigned to a given opinion in your results list will be zero ( "0"). By default, the number assigned to each opinion tells you how many times it has been cited nationally. If you click the link you will see the cases.

To sort by citation frequency, click the link captioned *Entire Database*. The most cited opinion matching your search criteria is now ranked first. Considering relevance together with citation frequency, will provide you with at-a-glance insight into opinions that are being cited most often for your point of law. A "most cited opinion" that has a 10% relevancy ranking, is being cited primarily for point(s) of law that do not match yours. Conversely, a most cited opinion with a relevancy ranking of 90% is being cited most frequently for your point of law.

#### **14) Find All Opinions Citing Your Statute For The Reason(s) You Specify**

**Instructions:** Using the text of the statute as your guide, choose the word or phrase that's important to you and filter your results by adding said word or phrase to your search.

**Sample Search:** Enter **782.04 & "sexual battery"** and click *SEARCH*

**Results:** This search finds any opinions citing your statute, together with additional search terms anywhere in the text of the case.

#### **15) Find Any Opinions Citing A Number/Word/Phrase Together With At Least One Of Several Alternative Number(s)/Word(s)/Phrase(s)**

**Instructions:** Using the facts of the case to force our choice of words, we filter by alternative terms, any instance of which would be relevant to our case.

**Sample Search:** Enter **782.04 & (knife or razor or stab!)** and click *SEARCH*

**Results:** This search finds opinions citing your statute, together with at least one variation related to the cause of death.

*Note: When searching for at least one occurrence of alternative terms together with at least one instance of a specific term, you must use parenthesis to group the alternative terms. It's like an algebra equation. This is also the only circumstances in which you would use parenthesis.*

#### **16) Find Any Opinions Citing A Number/Word/Phrase Within A Specified Number Of Words Away From Any Other Number/Word Phrase**

**Instructions:** Find any cases citing to a specified Federal statute or regulation.

**Sample Search:** Enter **18 /5 1344** and click *SEARCH*

**Results:** This search asks for opinions where the section appears within 5 words of the title number. We could have entered, for example: **"18 U.S.C. § 1344"** or **"18 U.S.C. sec. 1344"** or **"18 U.S.C. section 1344"** or **"18 U.S.C. §§ 1001, 1014, 1344"**. Why do all of that typing when **18 /5 1344** solves for every contingency in one mouseclick?

*Note: This format also works if your primary practice jurisdiction originates in the states of Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont or otherwise, where the statutory format is Title Number/Jurisdiction/Section Number.*

#### **17) Find Any Opinions Citing Your Opinion**

**Instructions:** Put quotation marks around your citation to turn it into a search phrase. This is called a citation driven search. You've been doing citation driven searches for years using the well known citators.

**Sample Search:** Enter **"792 P.2d 801"** and click *SEARCH*

**Results:** You find opinions citing your opinion in the jurisdictions you selected.

#### **18) Find Any Opinions Citing Your Opinion For Your Point Of Law**

**Instructions:** This search began with the Florida first degree murder statute - **782.04**. Our search lead us to 997 opinions. Our search on **782.04 & "sexual battery"** lead us to 145

opinions. The most cited/relevant of these 145 opinions is **375 So.2d 836**. *CiteTrak* instantly us this opinion has been cited 87 times nationally. We know that appellate opinions typically resolve three, four or five points of law. When we started our search it was all about the statute. Now it's all about this judicial opinion. But, we only want the subset of 87 opinions that cite our case for our point of law. We don't about the others.

**Sample Search:** Enter **375 So.2d 836 & "sexual battery"** and click *SEARCH*

**Results:** Of the original 87 opinions citing our leading case, 23 of them also expressly reference the term "sexual battery." In the results we sort by recency (Decision Date) and learn that the most recent opinion (of the 23) to cite our opinion for our reason is: *Brown v. State*, 761 So.2d 1135 (Fla. App. 1 Dist. 2000)

**Note:** *In seconds we went from the batch of 997 opinions citing our statute, to the subset of 145 opinions citing our statute for our point of law, to the subset of 23 opinions citing our most relevant opinion for our point of law, to the most recent opinion to cite our leading case for point of law. Not bad for a couple of minutes work.*

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*\* - For purposes of this tutorial, the term "statute" means statute, rule or regulation. All are codified items of information, comprised of a unique set of numbers in a unique format. Always anchor your search with the number assigned to the item of information driving your search. Why? For the same reason 404(b) is a better search term than prejudicial.*