Search by Topic or Headnote

Search by Topic or Headnote Feature Overview

Search by Topic or Headnote is a legal research tool based upon a system for classifying areas of law and related topics and matching the resulting legal taxonomy to the broad set of content available on the *lexis.com*® service. By matching documents to legal topics, the feature ensures on point results given the research matter at hand. The feature provides significant control over the size of the research net being cast, allowing for searches across broad topics (i.e. Family Law), mid-level topics (i.e. Parental Duties and Rights) or very narrow topics (i.e. Termination of Parental Rights Based on the Incarceration of a Parent).

Search by Topic or Headnote is of particular value for scenarios in which an individual may be searching an unfamiliar area of law, or when little information is known to formulate a search query; search terms are optional when launching a Search by Topic or Headnote search.

Upon accessing the feature, multiple options are provided to select a legal topic. Individuals may take advantage of the Find a Topic feature to search the legal taxonomy for matching topics across all practice areas. For example, a search on *plan terminations* will return topics under both Tax Law and Pensions & Benefits Law (among others). Note that the system will search both the topic title and content description for the search string.

As an alternative means of locating a topic, individuals may browse the legal taxonomy in a traditional "tree" format. When browsing, an individual shall first select a practice area to display an interactive "tree" representing its underlying topics. From this point the individual may expand the tree hierarchy until the lowest-level topic within a branch is displayed. A search of any node or branch within the hierarchy may be conducted, and once a node (topic) is selected, the customer is presented with the opportunity to assemble their search.

Based upon the selection of Topic and Jurisdiction(s), the Search by Topic will present a list of relevant sources that have been pre-determined to match the legal topic at hand, effectively removing the typical uncertainty surrounding what content to search. Upon selection of source(s), the user may input search terms (optional) using traditional Boolean or Natural Language methods, and launch the search. Search results are displayed in the same format for document display used across the *lexis.com* service, and provide the same capabilities such as Alerts, document delivery, and future access via the *lexis.com* History feature.

As an alternative to searching all related sources by topic, the feature also provides Search by Headnote capabilities, allowing individuals to retrieve all headnotes and additional cases related to the selected topic.

Legal Taxonomy

The taxonomy editorial team behind the LexisNexis® legal taxonomy is composed of professional law librarians and established attorneys who combine practice experience with extensive backgrounds in online searching. The taxonomy editorial team is responsible for the creation and maintenance of the taxonomy and the metadata that supports Search by Topic or Headnote. This editorial team works closely with Matthew Bender editors and other subject-matter experts in the identification of the legal topics. The legal topics correspond to established and emerging practice areas of law, while also covering subject matter addressed in many law school courses. All Topic Information summaries (scope notes) were prepared by the taxonomy editorial team, and Related Topics (cross-references) were put in place under the guidance of supervisory law librarians. As an added check, Matthew Bender editors have also reviewed and commented on the notes.

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The taxonomy editorial team crafts a search request underlying each topic—with input from Matthew Bender editors. The requests combine basic searching—simple terms and connectors—with more sophisticated search syntax. These attorney-editors are sensitive to the many word variations, statutory cites and other factors that help define a legal topic. The information, as appropriate, is incorporated into indexing queries to formulate searches that are broad enough to capture leading cases and precise enough to eliminate most irrelevant results.

For example, for Real Property > Landlord & Tenant > Assignments & Subleases, the retrieval algorithm includes variant word forms and spellings, synonyms and other words strongly related to the topic, such as:

- assignment
- assignor
- assignee
- lease
- leasehold
- sublease
- sub-lease
- sublet
- sub-let
- lessor
- lessee
- sublessor
- sublessee
- sub-lessor
- sub-lessee

The attorney-editor incorporates the variants into an indexing algorithm that considers proximity, term variety and frequency and, in some instances, location within the document. The indexing algorithm is run against documents as they are added online.

As part of ongoing maintenance:
- Topics are added to the legal taxonomy to include emerging issues and areas of law
- Indexing algorithms are reviewed and adjusted as changes or additions are made to LexisNexis content, and
- Regular re-indexing of the content occurs to ensure that the topical coverage available to customers is current and complete

Content Advantages

At the present time, Search by Topic or Headnote provides access to relevant Cases, Statutes & Regulations, Agency Materials, Restatements of Law, Matthew Bender® Treatises and Forms, Law Reviews & Journals, Briefs, Motions & Pleadings and Mealey's™ News and Litigation Reports. It is not, however, a static system: existing content is continually being updated to reflect the most recent changes in judicial and statutory law, and new content is continually being added to expand the overall scope of content coverage.

The integration of the authoritative Matthew Bender content into the Search by Topic system ensures a dynamic research tool. Each main section of more than 250 national and state analytical titles—totaling hundreds of thousands of sections of text—have been editorially associated and connected to 16,000+ topics contained within the Search by Topic or Headnote legal taxonomy.

How does the interconnection of topics to discrete portions of analytical discussion benefit the user? This powerful integrated and interconnected web of analytical content enhances the user's answer set, saves valuable research time and provides confidence that the user is obtaining effective and up-to-the-minute guidance on the issues most closely meeting the facts at hand.

Search by Topic removes uncertainties when deciding which sources to select when starting the research process. Given the overlap of practice areas with procedure and the overlap of one practice area with another, the user can now be confident knowing where to start their research. The user need only to select the subtopic from the taxonomy, and only the relevant sources in which the topic is discussed are made available for further research.

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And the sources may be surprising.. The user may not have realized that what they had identified and categorized as a bankruptcy issue may, in fact, be discussed more fully in a real estate publication, or that an environmental law question may have implications under health care law, and may be more specifically addressed in a health care law text. Since the foundation of most research is the specific facts of a client's situation, Search by Topic allows the user to uncover analysis in places they may never have thought to look. And by finding the key cases and fact situations that support that analysis, the user will be more likely to quickly and accurately match their research results to the facts at hand. A single section of a multi-volume publication may give the user exactly what they need. And Search by Topic helps to quickly and easily find it.

And it doesn't stop with analysis. Search by Topic, in addition, identifies the practice aids contained in the authoritative Matthew Bender analytical texts—the checklists, forms and drafting tips that differentiate and distinguish LexisNexis content and that save time and provide guidance to the user in the overlapping research issues that are faced every day. To use Search by Topic or Headnote, log on to the *lexis.com* service and click on the red Search tab. Underneath the Search tab, you will see by Topic or Headnote. Click there to begin using Search by Topic or Headnote.

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