I. What are you looking for?
Determine if the issue involves federal or state law and what type of primary law applies.

a. Primary Law
   i. Case: Decisions made by federal/state courts
   ii. Statutory: Laws passed by the federal/state legislature
   iii. Administrative: Rules and regulations passed by federal/state administrative agencies

To determine what law applies, you can use secondary sources, materials that explain, analyze, critique, or help you find the law.

b. Secondary Sources
   i. Legal Encyclopedias
   ii. Articles found in Legal Periodicals
   iii. Law Dictionaries
   iv. Law Reports
   v. Legal Treatises
   vi. Practice Materials (forms, guides, and other information)

II. Where to Begin
a. Scope—Be clear on the issue you are researching and for what purpose
b. Basic Facts—Ask who, what, when, where and how
c. Terms—Identify a list of search terms; writing down synonyms and related words may be helpful as different resources use different terminology to refer to the same topic; use a legal dictionary and thesaurus

III. Finding the Law
a. Cases
   i. Cases can be found by citation, topic, and name
   ii. Cases are compiled in print sets called case reports or reporters
      1. Courts at each level publish their decisions in chronological order
      2. Federal and state courts use a similar hierarchical organization
          a. lowest to highest: trial court, appellate court, highest court
   iii. Case law is also available online through individual court web pages and through paid subscription databases
b. Statutes
   i. Statutes can be found by citation, subject, or popular name
   ii. Statutes are published in several formats: session laws, statutory codes, and annotated codes
      1. Session laws are compiled in chronological order
      2. Statutory codes are arranged by subject
      3. Annotated codes include the history of the law, cases that interpret the law, citations to regulations promulgated under the law, law review articles, and other research aids.
   iii. Using an index is the best way to approach subject searching
   iv. A popular name table can be used to point you towards the appropriate title and section number of a code; however, not every statute has a popular name, nor is a listing available for every jurisdiction (Ex. Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. §7401)

c. Administrative Law (agency law)
   i. Rules and Regulations for regulating an area of conduct (Ex. Food and Drug Administration regulates drug safety by requiring pharmaceutical companies to adhere to testing and reporting procedures)
   ii. Published in proposed and final form
      1. Federal Register (FR) - a daily publication that presents agency business in chronological order, showing what is done on a day-to-day basis
      2. Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) - a subject arrangement of regulations organized by agency into fifty titles, which are subdivided into parts, and further subdivided into sections

IV. Finding and Using Secondary Sources
a. Many secondary sources are well known print sets that are easy to spot in the reference section of the library; use the online catalog
b. Many secondary sources are also available online through paid subscription databases in the form of articles and eBooks; access databases directly through the library website
c. Indexes both in print and online can be used to find articles in law reviews and law journals
d. Full text searching is available to search online databases; search by author, title, citation, or keyword

V. Citations
Citations can be found in secondary sources, annotated statutory codes, case digests, and citators such as Shepard’s Citations Service.
Example of a standard three-part citation for a case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>514</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>S Ct.</td>
<td>1733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131</td>
<td>L. Ed. 2d</td>
<td>759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>U.S.L.W.</td>
<td>4387</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Many cases are often reported in several different *reporters* resulting in parallel citations as provided in the example above.

In Lexis-Nexis the parallel citations will display as:
514 U.S. 673; 115 S. Ct. 1733; 131 L. Ed. 2d 759; 1995 U.S. LEXIS 3214; 514 U.S. 673

Tip: Use *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* to find citation formats (see Citations Formats Handout for examples)

Example of a standard three-part citation for a statute.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Section Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>USCS</td>
<td>§ 5901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>USCS</td>
<td>SEC 5901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>USCS</td>
<td>SECTION 5901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>PL</td>
<td>509</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example of an agency regulation citation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Part. Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>FR</td>
<td>63123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>CFR</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>CFR</td>
<td>Part 404 APPENDIX I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VI. **Shepard’s Citations**
   a. Shepard’s Citations Service can be used to verify the validity of case law, statutes, agency opinions, and other legal documents.
   b. It is important to verify the validity of a law to determine if a case has been reversed, overruled, or otherwise impacted by subsequent authorities; checking to see if it is still a “good law”
   c. Note: Only Case Law is covered in LexisNexis Academic
   d. Known as Shepardizing

Compiled with information obtained from Cornell University Law Library and LexisNexis Academic.