

# *A KCLL Research Guide*

## Digest Searches on Westlaw

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### Searching the Topic Field on Westlaw

While searching on Westlaw, you can retrieve cases with head notes classified under a specific West digest topic by using a topic field restriction. Follow these steps.

1. Choose your case law database.
2. To retrieve all case head notes classified under topic 409 (Wills), type **to(409)** or **to(wills)** in the search window.
3. To focus your search, you can add descriptive terms; for example, type **to(409)/p "condition subsequent "** in the search window.

### Topic and Key Number Searching on Westlaw

1. To do a topic and key number search simply type the topic number, the letter *k* and the key number.
2. For example, to retrieve cases with head notes classified under topic 92 and key number 268(5), type **92k268(5)** in the search window.

**92** = West digest topic number for Constitutional

**k** = West key number symbol

**268(5)** = West digest key number for Due Process of Law; Disclosure and Discovery, Notice of Defense

3. To narrow your search, add additional search terms.  
For example, the search **343k255 /p privity** retrieves cases with head notes classified under topic 343 (Sales) and key number 255 (Parties) that also contain the term *privity* in the same digest paragraph.
4. Another method is to use a key number and topic from a case you have already found that is on point. For example, use a case name you know is on point and combine it with a topic and word search such as: **Strickland** and **to(Criminal or 110) /p "ineffective assistance of counsel"** to find other cases.
5. You can also do a search by choosing either the **KeySearch** or **Custom Digest** link at the bottom of the Westlaw search window and following the directions.

The **Custom Digest** link includes the list of Digest Topics and Key Numbers, as you would find them in a paper digest, so most easily duplicates a digest search. Ask the Library Staff for additional help with your search.