Worksheet

The Five Questions

A worksheet for initiating research

**Question 1:** What is the general legal topic?

*Hint:* Torts? Contracts? Criminal law? Use a dictionary or encyclopedia to get background information and to look up additional keywords.

*Answer:*

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**Question 2:** What type of law am I looking for?

*Hint:* State or federal or both? Statute, regulation, case law, or a combination?

*Answer:*

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**Question 3:** What secondary sources do I investigate?

*Hint:* Encyclopedia? Law review or journals? Mainstream media? Interest group or agency Web sites?

*Answer:*

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**Question 4:** Where can I find relevant information?

*Hint:* Answer this question in detail. Do not simply answer the Internet; include possible Web sites. Do not just answer Lexis; include the library and file.

*Answer:*
**Question 5:** How do I formulate my query?

**Hint:** Identify keywords and determine the best way to put them together.

**Answer:**
Worksheet

Query Troubleshooting

A handy reference for resolving research problems

Trouble Shooting Question: Did I plan my strategy?

Comments: Do not skip the planning process! Make sure to take each step of your strategy.

Result of double checking:

Trouble Shooting Question: Am I searching in the right place?

Comments: Make sure that you are using the right database and that the information on it contains is neither too broad nor too narrow for your search.

Result of double checking:

Trouble Shooting Question: Am I using the right words?

Comments: Check your terms and include alternative words with the OR operator. Use legal dictionary to expand possible terms.

Result of double checking:

Trouble Shooting Question: Do I understand what I am looking for?

Comments: Make sure you really understand the question. Use a legal dictionary or encyclopedia for clarification.

Result of double checking:
**Trouble Shooting Question:** Am I misusing the phrase operator?

*Comments:* If using a phrase operator, make sure it is not too specific. Rework using proximity search operators.

*Result of double checking:*

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**Trouble Shooting Question:** Does what I am looking for exist?

*Comments:* Think about whether the information exists at all or exists electronically where you are looking.

*Result of double checking:*

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**Trouble Shooting Question:** Did I spell my words correctly?

*Comments:* Make sure the spelling, spacing, and punctuation in your search term are correct.

*Result of double checking:*