

University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law
Charles N. and Hilda H. M. Mason Law Library

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Legal Encyclopedias in Print

Generally:

- ***American Jurisprudence (AmJur)*** and ***Corpus Juris Secundum (CJS)*** are two multi-volume encyclopedias of all major legal topics, and, importantly, they include citations to caselaw, statutes, and regulatory law in all jurisdictions. Some legal encyclopedias focus on a single state.
- **Do not cite to an encyclopedia in briefs and papers.** Encyclopedias are no substitute for citing the law itself (a case, statute or regulation, e.g.), in the view of most courts.

Always Update Print Encyclopedias

- Check for a softbound supplemental pamphlet shelved beside the hard bound book.
- Look for pocket parts inside the back cover pocket.
- Use *Shepard's* to update cases and statutes. Online, update with *Shepard's* (Lexis) or *Keycite* (Westlaw).

Legal Encyclopedias Are Useful for:

- Starting place -- for research
- Explanations of most topics -- in law
- Explanations of legal language -- terms of art
- Source of keywords -- for online Boolean searching
- Citations -- to key cases, statutes and regulations
- Citations to other secondary sources for explanations of legal theory, trends, etc.

How to Use Legal Encyclopedias

- Start with the indexes at the end of the set.
- After you find the volume cited in the index,
 - Look for citations in the footnotes at the bottom of the page;
 - See if the volume is updated by
 - Pocket part
 - Supplemental volume.

How to Cite a Legal Encyclopedia

- Cite to legal encyclopedias only in your school work (not court papers or law review articles).
- Use *The Bluebook*, Rule 15.8, Special Citation Forms, e.g.,
 - 17 AM. JUR.2D *Contracts* § 74 (1964)
 - 88 C.J.S. *Trials* § 192 (1955)

American Jurisprudence (AmJur)

- Easy to read and understand.
- Comprehensive – more than 80 volumes.
- Cross-referenced to other Thomson West publications, using West Topic and Key Number system:

American Digest System
ALR and ALR Federal
AmJur Legal Forms 2d, AmJur Trials

*AmJur Pleading and Practice Forms Revised
Proof of Facts, Federal Procedure*

- Updated with pocket parts and volume supplements.
- Good indexes at the end of the set:
 - General index (descriptive-word index) at the end of the set
 - Topic index and a New Topics volume or binder at the end
 - AmJur Deskbook volume at the end – useful facts and figures for legal researchers.

Location: Reference Room.

Corpus Juris Secundum (C.J.S.)

- Cross-referenced to other Thomson West products, using the West Topic and Key Number system
- Very comprehensive and detailed
- Updated with pocket parts and cumulative pocket part supplements
- Good indexes at the end of the set
- Separate topic indexes follow topic volumes
- Summarizes prevailing law (“black letter law”)
- Outline at the beginning of each topic
- More than 80 volumes

Location: Clinic Library.

State Legal Encyclopedias

- Much more detail than in *AmJur* or *C.J.S.*
- Many are published by Thomson (West) or Reed Elsevier’s LexisNexis Group
- Similar to *AmJur* and *C.J.S.*, but not as highly regarded.
- Organization varies.

Location: Following state statutes in the Main Collection stacks.

West’s Encyclopedia of American Law

- Easy to understand summaries of major topics
- Written for the non-lawyer
- Twelve volume set

Location: Reference Room, Ref. KF154 .W47 (1998)