

FINDING COURT CASES BY SUBJECT USING DIGESTS

Court digests are large multi-volume sets that list court cases under broad subject categories that have numbered (key number) subdivisions to represent various subtopics of the broad legal subject area. For each court decision there is a paragraph description, the name of the case and the citation to the volume - court reporter - and beginning page number where the case decision can be found. Digests have detailed subject indexes called *Descriptive Word Indexes*. Begin your subject search in the *Descriptive Word Index*, which will lead you to appropriate broad categories in the digest volumes for cases on your topic. ****Digests are kept up to date by pocket parts inserted in the back of each volume to add the most current cases to appropriate topic areas. Always check both the main volume and the pocket part to get all cases on a topic.****

TO FIND A US SUPREME COURT DECISION

1. Use the *United States Supreme Court Digest* (MAIN REF KF 101.1 U55) to identify cases on your topic:

a. Look up your **topic** in the *Descriptive Word Index* of the **US Supreme Court Digest**. Find the digest topic and key number.

SAMPLE:

MUSICAL COMPOSITIONS

COPYRIGHT. Copyr 8
Infringement. Copyr 66

Evidence, weight and sufficiency. Copyr 83(6)
Partial invalidity of statute. Statute 64(2)

DIGEST TOPIC

KEY NUMBER

b. Look up your **digest topic** and **key number** in the appropriate volume of the *United States Supreme Court Digest*. Identify **case name** and **court reporter citation**.

SAMPLE:

COPYRIGHTS & INTELL. PROP.

66. Musical works.

U.S. Pa. 1975. No license is required by the Copyright Act to sing a copyrighted lyric for ones own gratification. 17 U.S.C.A. § 1. ---Twentieth Century Music Corp vs. Aiken, 95 S. Ct. 2040, 422 U.S. 151, 45 L.Ed.2d 84.

An orchestra or individual instrumentalists or singer who performs a copyrighted musical composition in a public place without a license is an infringer and the entrepreneur who sponsors such a public performance for profit is also an infringer, direct or contributory. 17 U.S.C.A. § 1(e). ---Id.

CASE NAME

COURT REPORTER CITATION
(vol - abbrev. of court reporter title - page)

2. Locate the **text** of the court decision in either:

US--*United States Reports* (MAIN REF JK 1561 U5)

LE, LE2d—*United States Supreme Court Reports. Lawyers Edition*
(MAIN REF JK 1561 U51)

TO FIND A US COURT OF APPEALS DECISION and a FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT OPINION

1. Use **West's Federal Practices Digest**, 4th edition (REF KF 127 M635) to identify cases on your topic. (Same procedure as above). You will find two levels of federal courts in this digest. You can tell which is which by the reporter citation:

Federal District Court decisions-- *Federal Supplement* (FS)

US Court of Appeals decisions-- *Federal Reporter* (F, F2d, F3d)

2. Locate the text of the court decisions in the appropriate reporter.

West's Federal Supplement MAIN REF KF 127 F434

West's Federal Reporter MAIN REF KF 127 F4

TO FIND A CALIFORNIA COURT DECISION

1. Use **West's California Digest** (MAIN REF KFC57 .W47) to identify cases on your topic. (Same procedure as above).

2. Locate your case in *West's California Reporter* (CalRptr) REF JK 8781 A5 C38