



## RESEARCHING FEDERAL AND STATE STATUTES

Before you head to the statutes, remember that the work may have already been done for you by secondary sources. For example, for researching tort law in North Carolina, there are two books dedicated to the topic: [North Carolina Law of Torts](#) and the [North Carolina Prima Facie Tort Manual](#).

Use the library's online [catalog](#) to see if there are any books on your topic. For more information on secondary sources, see [Using Secondary Sources](#).

### I. Federal Statutes

#### Step 1: Choosing and Locating a Source

There are three sources for federal statutes, and each source has strengths and weaknesses.

##### 1. United States Code (USC)

Location: Compact Shelving Reporters: KF 62 2000

Online: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/uscode/browse.html> or  
<http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/>

The USC is the official code published by the Government Printing Office every six years (the latest edition is 2000) and supplemented by yearly updates. Topics are arranged by title and the titles are arranged alphabetically. The online edition is searchable but is not indexed.

##### 2. United States Code Annotated (USCA)

Location: Atrium, KF 62.5 W45; Westlaw Database: USCA

West's USCA contains both the text of the USC and annotations to cases and secondary sources. The USCA provides more comprehensive annotations than the USCS. It is updated faster than the USC.

##### 3. United States Code Service (USCS)

Location: Atrium, KF 62 1972 .L38; Lexis-Nexis Database: USCS

The USCS, published by Lexis-Nexis, contains annotations to cases and secondary sources, but it is more selective than the USCA. Like the USCA, it is updated faster than the USC.

*Tip: Why use the USC? The Bluebook requires citation to the official code.*

#### Step 2: Use the Index and/or Popular Names Table

##### Popular Names Table

Location: Shelved at the end of the USCA and USCS

Available on LexisNexis and Westlaw under USCS or USCA



Often one will have a name of an act but not a citation. By using a popular name table one can correlate the name of a statute with its location in the code.

## **Indexes**

Location: Shelved at the end of the USCA and USCS

Available on LexisNexis and Westlaw under USCS or USCA

LexisNexis and West both publish multi-volume indexes. Due to the size of the indexes it is likely that even highly specific terms will be found. For example “ants” and “coffee pots” both have individual entries in West’s General Index. Although the purpose of Lexis-Nexis and West’s indexes is identical, they are both uniquely indexed.

*Tip: In the print USCA, cross references state “this index”. This refers to the entire multi-volume index, not necessarily the individual index volume.*

## **Title Indexes**

The last volume of each title indexes that volume. This feature allows one to search through a focused search instead of the broader index.

### **Step 3: Updating a Statute**

Both the USCA and USCS in print are updated by supplements, pocket parts, and statutory supplement volumes following the code.

1. Pocket parts are found in the back of hardcover statute volumes. The cover page of the pocket part notes the date of the update.
2. Some volumes are also updated by soft cover supplements shelved after the hardcover volume. The date of the update is on the cover.
3. The USCA and USCS are also updated in print via softcover pamphlets that update the code with the latest changes in law and annotations. The latest pamphlets received are about two months old.
4. Lastly, use electronic sources such as Westlaw, Lexis-Nexis or free online versions to update the code fully. (see Step one for sources.)

*Tip: Even if the statutory language has not changed, new cases interpreting the law may emerge during this phase of research.*

## **II. State Statutes**

State statutes, while varying by jurisdiction, follow the same pattern as above. One chooses either the official version, uses the index and/or popular names table, and finally updates the statute.

### **North Carolina Statutes**

Location: Reference, KFN 7430 1943 .A24 2000 (West); KFN 7430 2005 .22 (Lexis)



**South Carolina Statutes**

Location: Reference, KFS 1830 1976 .A2

**Other States**

Location: Compact Shelving

See [catalog](#) for exact call numbers.