



Thomas M. Cooley Law Libraries' Research Guide Series

Form Books: A Selective Research Guide

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Overview:

This research guide is a selective guide to assist the legal researcher in knowing when and how to use form books. It is not comprehensive in scope or intended to be a catchall source, but rather to act as a starting point for the researcher to find additional sources and relevant information. The resources listed are those owned or available at the Cooley libraries.

I. HOW TO USE FORM BOOKS

The preparation or drafting of legal documents can be time consuming, difficult, often requiring an acute attention to detail. To avoid duplication of effort, law students and attorneys have come to rely on form books. Law students use them as a way to gain experience on the appropriate language to use that will accomplish their objective. Alternately, attorneys use them to conserve valuable time.

Form books are an excellent starting place to find standardized forms that can be drafted to fit a specific situation. It is important to think of the forms provided in form books as samples—they should be refined to fit a particular need or function. Copying language without consideration of the situation it will be used for could be ruinous.

Form books may be categorized: general, subject, federal or state specific. In the case of this research guide, general, federal and state specific forms will be discussed. Other subject-specific guides dealing with areas of the law such as bankruptcy, family law, real estate, and contracts are also available at the Cooley libraries. For more information on where to find these materials, please see a Reference Librarian.

General forms are not state-specific. Works containing these forms can be encyclopedic in size and may provide a topical index to help legal researchers narrow down their search for a specific form. Also, the jurisdiction in which the form is being drafted should be taken into consideration. A form can be rendered useless if the guidelines governing the specific jurisdiction the form is being used in it are not applied.

Overall, form books are a time-saving aid for students and attorneys. By narrowing down the type of form that is needed, users are on their way to utilizing a helpful resource.



II. GENERAL FORM BOOKS

American Jurisprudence Legal Forms 2d

Location: [KF 170 .A542](#)

Arranged alphabetically by legal topic, *American Jurisprudence Legal Forms* provides a form for almost every situation which would require one. The beginning of each chapter provides a "Scope of Chapter," "Research References" and an outline of forms falling under that chapter's subject area. Also, if applicable, instructions are made available for the form. This set of form books also contains an index for easy searching.

American Jurisprudence Pleading and Practice Forms Annotated

Location: [KF 8836 .A45](#)

American Jurisprudence Pleading and Practice Forms Annotated offers a "carefully compiled and edited collection" of forms. Through their key number classification, this set is assembled to also coordinate with the West digests and Westlaw. Besides the numerous forms, a useful feature is the "Procedural Timetable" in volume 1. It serves as a reminder to students (and attorneys) to take the appropriate steps in essential order.

Bender's Forms of Discovery

Location: [KF 8900 .A3 B4](#)

Bender's Forms of Discovery is a twenty-seven volume, looseleaf compilation of interrogatories designed to enable student and attorneys obtain information from individuals that may be essential to trial. Topics are arranged alphabetically, from *accountants* to *zoning*, and offer three appendices covering uniform interrogatories, discovery rules and disclosure implementation reports. There is also an index.

Current Legal Forms, with Tax Analysis by Jacob Rabkin and Mark H. Johnson

Location: [KF 170 .R3](#)

Current Legal Forms is considered an important form book covering tax information and is often referred to as simply "Rabkin and Johnson" by attorneys and students alike. Frequently updated, this title provides tax background for each chapter topic as well as drafting guidelines and then the forms themselves.

The Essential Formbook by Gary A. Munneke

Location: [KF 318 .A65 M85](#)

As defined in the preface, the purpose of *Essential Formbook* is to provide attorneys and law firms a text in which to serve clients better; to provide good service. The content of the form book includes a table of contents, general introductory or explanatory text, checklists, forms (with description and explanation) as well as resources.

Federal Procedural Forms, Lawyers Edition

Location: [KF 8836 .F4](#)

Published by West, *Federal Procedural Forms* provides practice-oriented forms for federal, judicial, and administrative proceedings. It employs the key number system and also includes court rules, administrative regulations, checklists and checkpoints. Perhaps most useful, is a table of abbreviations, which aids the user.



Modern Legal Forms

Location: [KF 170 .M6](#)

Utilizing West's key number system, *Modern Legal Forms* works in conjunction with other West publications. The forms have been keyed to sections of *Corpus Juris Secundum*, explanatory comments and notes have been expanded, and case citations have also been provided. Topics are arranged alphabetically from *abstracts of title* to *zoning*. A thorough index is also available at the end of the set.

Nichols Cyclopeda of Legal Forms Annotated by Clark Asahel Nichols

Location: [KF 170 .N5](#)

Nichols Cyclopeda of Legal Forms Annotated is designed to be user-friendly. Each chapter and topic is arranged alphabetically and includes four basic sections: "Suggestions," "Tax Introduction," "Research and Drafting Aids," and "Forms." If applicable, the forms are then arranged by state for easier use. In addition, under "Tax Notes," a number of general checklists have been added on tax and estate planning matters.

West's Federal Forms

Location: [KF 8836 .W4](#)

West's Federal Forms is arranged by type of proceeding and the court for which they pertain: Supreme Court, courts of appeal, civil and criminal district courts, bankruptcy court, admiralty court, and tax court. This set also includes a meticulous index, table of statutes, and court rules. Along with the forms, comments are provided at the end of each section that give users background information on how the form was adapted and the decisions that shaped it.

West's Legal Forms 3d

Location: [KF 1384 .A65 W47](#)

West's Legal Forms is a set dedicated to the discussion of and the forms relating to business organizations. Information on tax law is also included, with regard to business organizations. Volume 1, for example, offers the user basic tax terms and concepts before launching into concepts and accompanying forms. As indicated in the preface, the author has been careful to "give the user a variety of formats (from simple to complex)."

III. MICHIGAN FORM BOOKS

Michigan Approved Court Forms

Location: [KFM 4730 .A65 M5](#)

Michigan Approved Court Forms is easy to use and straightforward to search. A two-volume set, users can search for the form that they require by using one of the following: the numerical index, the alphabetical index or the subject index. circuit court forms are separated from Michigan court forms to prevent confusion. The forms in this set are ready to be drafted to meet the needs of the attorney or student.

Michigan Basic Practice Handbook

Location: [KFM 4277 .M522](#)

Michigan Basic Practice Handbook is a two-volume set that is perfect for the new attorney or the seasoned practitioner. It contains information on basic law for over twenty practice areas such as opening a law practice, drafting contracts, debt collection and administering



decedents' estates. New chapters, "Alternative Dispute Resolution," and "Preparing, Filing and Serving the Complaint," bring this resource up to date.

Michigan Business Formbook

Location: [KFM 4352 .A65 M532](#)

With topics covering limited liability corporations (LLCs), traditional corporations, partnerships, and professional ethics, *Michigan Business Formbook* is an excellent resource for the attorney or student. This two-volume set also includes an overview for the topic of each chapter. This overview outlines when certain forms are to be used and for what purpose.

Michigan Causes of Action Formbook

Location: [KFM 4730 .A65 M524](#)

Michigan Causes of Action Formbook covers the major areas of civil litigation. Each section provides a brief introduction to the topic being discussed and is followed by summaries and complaints for numerous causes of action. Topics covered are: pleadings, torts, contract and business disputes, employment claims, special actions as well as many others.

Michigan Civil Practice Forms by Harold B. (H.B.) Clark

Location: [KFM 4730 .A65 C53](#)

Michigan Civil Practice Forms is designed to be a guide for the forms required in the various courts of Michigan. Arranged alphabetically by topic, the forms are largely intended for action dealing with a particular subject, however, there are practice forms available. Text "has been held to a minimum," although, suggestions and reminders are included at the start of every chapter.

Michigan Civil Procedure Forms: Practice by Jeffrey N. Shillman

Location: [KFM 4730 .A65 S54 1989](#)

This text is designed to assist the user in locating various forms to implement the Michigan Court Rules. Pleadings, court papers and other related documents are all available. The author does note, however, that not every Michigan rule is discussed in this title, only those that "generate or affect the forms of pleadings or other court papers." An accompanying CD also provides many of the forms on disk.

Michigan Legal Forms

Location: [KFM 4268 .M53](#)

Attorneys and students are able to save time drafting documents with *Michigan Legal Forms*. Designed with certain situations in mind, the forms inside these eleven volumes may also be customized and have been approved for court use. Chapter topics include "Business Corporations," "Estate Planning," "Family Law," "Real Estate" and the "Uniform Commercial Code."

Michigan Pleading and Practice

Location: [KFM 4730 .M52](#)

Model forms are included along with discussion of practice civil litigation in *Michigan Pleading and Practice*. Related legal issues are discussed and footnotes are provided that hold relevant case information. For those unsure on where to start, Chapter 1 holds "an



introduction to the Michigan judicial system and discusses generally the law that governs Michigan.”

IV. DATABASES

Westlaw

[Federal Procedural Forms](#) (FEDPROF)
[West's Federal Forms](#) (FEDFORMS)
[All Forms](#) (FORMS-ALL)
[All State and General Contracts/Commercial Forms](#) (CMLFORMS-ALL)
[All State and General Real Property Forms](#) (RPFORM-ALL)
[American Jurisprudence Legal Forms](#) (AMJUR-LF)
[American Jurisprudence Pleading and Practice Forms](#) (AMJUR-PP)
[Nichols Cyclopeda of Legal Forms Annotated](#) (NICHOLS-LF)
[West's Legal Forms](#) (WEST-LF)
[Michigan Civil Practice Forms](#) (MI-CIVPRAC)
[Michigan Pleading and Practice](#) (MI-PP)
[Michigan Legal Forms](#) (MI-LF)

Lexis

[Bender's Federal Practice Forms](#) (MATBEN; FDPRAC)
[All Transactions LexisNexis Forms](#) (MATBEN; LNFABT)

V. INTERNET RESOURCES

FedForms

<http://www.fedforms.gov>

Deemed as the “U.S. Government’s Official Hub for Federal Forms,” this site offers users a variety of ways to search for the form they need: by form number, agency, agency list, and alphabetical list. There is also a section of “Frequently Used Forms” for quick reference and use. For those still unable to find what they need, *FedForms* provides users with the links to FirstGov and the Government Services Administration library.

FindForms

<http://www.findforms.com>

FindForms separates their site between forms that are free for download and those that cost a nominal fee before being downloaded. The “Find” box in the middle of the homepage allows users to search for the desired form and a list of the twenty-five most popular forms is also provided. An email newsletter is also an option to keep users abreast of changes to the site and up-to-date on new forms that are added regularly.

Findlaw Forms

<http://forms.lp.findlaw.com>

The forms portion of this popular website can tend to be cluttered with advertisements mentioning form preparation services for a fee. However, what divides this site from the others previously mentioned is that it classifies its forms by “Federal Court Forms” and “State Court Forms.” This makes it easier for users to locate the form they need for the jurisdiction they live in.



Internet Legal Resource Group

<http://www.ilrg.com/forms/>

Also boasting the Internet's largest collection of free legal forms—2000+ and growing—*Internet Legal Resource Group (ILRG)* tries to make a commitment to its users. *ILRG* provides \$50.00 to those who can demonstrate that their forms are not in compliance with state law. The site also seeks feedback if users are not able to find a specific form, stating that they'll try to include that form in the future. These efforts may make *ILRG* more user-friendly.

The 'Lectric Law Library Forms Room

<http://www.lectlaw.com/formb.htm>

The 'Lectric Law Library Forms Room divides its forms into two sections: business and general (real estate, corporations, employment, etc.) and legal practice (law practice management, litigation, etc.). Besides offering just forms, this site also offers articles on recent developments in the law and a legal dictionary.

Legaldocs.com

<http://www.legaldocs.com/index.aspx>

While openly stating that some forms are free and some are available at a charge, *Legaldocs* allows users to preview all forms for free. This proves to be helpful for users who are slightly unsure of the form they're looking for. The price for those forms that are available at a charge varies depending upon the complexity of the form. A click on "Free Docs" brings users directly to those forms that are free-of-charge.

LexisOne Forms

<http://www.lexisone.com/store/catalog?action=main>

Users may search for forms a number of ways on LexisOne: by reviewing a list of automated forms (packages of forms that can be purchased and are organized by topic or state), by accessing their forms subscriptions (for those who are already forms customers and have set forms subscriptions determined) and by reviewing a list of free legal forms. An "Advanced Search" box and "Search Tips" suggestions are provided for those unsure of how to navigate the site.

WashLaw WEB

<http://www.washlaw.edu/legalforms/>

Compiled by the Washburn School of Law, *WashLaw* has a link to a legal form resource page that offers state business forms, state tax forms, state company formation forms, real estate forms, contract forms, will forms, and federal and state court forms. Forms are not available for all fifty states under each section, so users need to determine if their state is listed under the various sections.

