



# San Diego County Public Law Library

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## Research Guide

### How to Track a California Case Online

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#### Scope:

This guide describes various ways of locating information online about the status of and proceedings in cases which have been filed in the following California courts:

- California Supreme Court
- California Courts of Appeal
- California Superior Courts
- Ninth Circuit Federal Court of Appeals

#### California Supreme Court and California Courts of Appeal

You can find information on cases before the California Supreme Court and the California Courts of Appeal at <http://appellatecases.courtinfo.ca.gov>. Case information is updated once an hour throughout the business day. To find case information on this page, you will need to know either in which court (supreme or appellate) or in which county (if it is a superior court case) the case is situated. From there you will be directed to a page on which you can search for the case using the case (or “docket”) number, the names of one or both parties, or the attorney’s name. You can also search for Court of Appeal cases by court calendar date. Searchable California Supreme Court and California Courts of Appeal cases (1850- Present) can be located at <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/opinions/>.

#### California Superior Courts

Depending on the court, you may be able to find detailed case information online for superior court cases. There are a number of ways to search online.

One good source is found at <http://courtnfo.ca.gov/courts>. Click on the link to “Superior Courts” and then “California Superior Court Contact Information” to see a list of hyperlinks to numerous California Superior Court websites. Some (but not all) California Superior Courts provide links to information regarding individual cases, often in a section called the “Court Index.” Unfortunately, the location of this information on a court’s website, and even what it is called, differs with each court.

You can also access the San Diego County Superior Court website directly at [www.sdcourt.ca.gov](http://www.sdcourt.ca.gov). The court posts some of its tentative rulings on its website, and you can find these by clicking on the drop down arrow next to “online services” and choosing “Civil Law and Motion Rulings.” You will need to have the docket number of the particular case for which you are seeking rulings. To find out where the physical case file (the collection of all court filings in the case, including court rulings) is kept for a particular San Diego Superior Court case, click on the link to the “Court Index Inquiry” on the court’s homepage. You can search the court index by either party name or docket number. The “New Case Filings” link will take you to a list of cases filed with the court within the past five days.

### **Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals**

All opinions issued by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal since 1995, and memoranda (opinions which the court has deemed “not for publication”) issued during the past calendar year, are available on the court’s website at <http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov>. Click on the link to either “Memoranda” or “Opinions.” You can also check the status of cases which are to be (or which have recently been) heard *en banc* by clicking on the link to “Pending En Banc Cases.” This site includes dates of relevant orders, citations for any published opinions, the current status of the case, members of the *en banc* court, issues raised on appeal, and whether there has been a holding by the court.

For detailed information about any pending Ninth Circuit or other Federal case, you can search PACER, a pay-per-use online database of unpublished Federal court documents. There is a separate Research Guide describing the PACER services. You can access them directly at <http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov>. You can create your own user account (there is usually a wait of several days while the service sends you your user information, and you will then pay a small fee for each page downloaded), or one of the librarians can sign you into the Library’s account, which you can use for the cost of printing.

### **Other resources:**

You can access published opinions from federal and state appellate and supreme court cases online through Westlaw and Lexis, which are available free on the Library’s computers. You can also find certain published opinions for free on the Internet sites [www.Findlaw.com](http://www.Findlaw.com) and [www.LexisOne.com](http://www.LexisOne.com). Consult with a reference librarian regarding these and other resources for published cases online.