I. **Understand Your Problem.** Don’t be afraid to ask the following questions:

- Why am I doing this project, and how will you use my work?
- What is the priority on this assignment?
- When do you want this project? Would you like to review my draft(s) earlier? When?
- Are there any in-office or in-library aids (similar case file, office memorandum, office research guide, etc.) That I could consult to assist me with this project?
- Do you want to talk to me again about this assignment? When or under what circumstances do I contact you?
- What decisions should I make about this project? Should I proceed based on my research or should I ask you or someone else to review my work first?
- How much time should I spend on this project?
- To summarize: “Let me see if I understand you clearly. This is what I will do. . . . Is that what you want?”

II **Analyze Your Problem.** This is a quick, initial analysis.

Is your problem (may be more than one of each category)

1. □ state   □ federal   □ administrative
2. □ civil    □ criminal
3. □ substantive □ procedural
4. □ statutory □ common law

If civil, what area of law predominates? (Watch out for multiple areas.)

□ torts   □ contracts   □ labor/employment law   □ securities
□ bankruptcy □ international issue □ immigration □ are tax issues involved?
□ real property □ healthcare □ education □ intellectual property
□ personal injury (if so what caused injury: product, individual or combination?)
If criminal,

- misdemeanor
- pre-arrest
- post-trial
- imprisonment issues

- Are constitutional issues involved?

- What’s been done to-date on the case? Review All records, briefs, files, etc. and make notes on ALL cases, statutes, rules etc. that are referenced anywhere in the materials reviewed.

- Link What and When - Identify dates for all available information and research. This will be necessary to determine usefulness, validity, and will be essential in updating information about the case.

Do you need non-legal information?

- Economic information
- Additional facts
- Business or corporate data
- Information about people

- Do you know anything about this problem?

- Have you ever researched this or a similar issue before?

- Do you know anyone that you can call who has researched this issue or is an expert on this issue?

III. Develop a Research Strategy Based on the Choices Made in I & II

Be prepared to adjust this research strategy as you obtain additional information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Sources</th>
<th>Secondary Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>Legal Encyclopedias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutes</td>
<td>Treatises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniform Laws or Model Laws</td>
<td>Looseleaf Sets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative History</td>
<td>Hornbooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Materials</td>
<td>A.L.R. Annotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules and/or Regulations</td>
<td>Words &amp; Phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Adjudications</td>
<td>Periodical Articles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV  CALR - Computer Assisted Legal Research

- Have I done all possible work off-line?

- Is this a good issue/question for CALR? Online searching is most useful for:
  Updating previously completed research
  Shepardizing/KeyCiting
  Reading and updating administrative regulations
  New and emerging areas of law
  Unique terms used in unique ways
  Decisions by specific judges, cases involving specific attorneys, etc.

- What on-line resources are available to me?

- What cost restraints exist if any?

  Are there client limits for online research?
  What are the firm policies regarding online research?
  Understand your on-line billing structure and plan your searches accordingly.
  Is your billing package limited to Florida with additional fees for searches in other databases?
  Your time may be less valuable than online time!

- Plan your search strategy offline.

  Know where you are going to find the information you are looking for.
  Understand the information you are looking for.
  Know the terms that will be used in the sources you are searching.
  Select the smallest possible database.
  Select subject specific databases.
  Integrate these selections into your search strategies.

- Understand Natural Language and Terms and Connectors Searching.

  Natural Language Searching Advantages:
  Query formulation by the computer – you don’t have to do it yourself.
  You don’t need to know the key legal terms or subjects
  You will always get some results – they may not be the best results, but you get something.

  Natural Language Search Disadvantages:
  You have very little control over the structure of your search.
  The computer decides on the relevant terms and their importance for your search.
  You get very broad search results, and these results may be irrelevant.

  Terms and Connectors Searching Advantages:
  You pick the terms and control the results.
  Search results are more precise and relevant.
  Search results are complete.

  Terms and Connectors Searching Disadvantages:
  You need to know the terms and how they are used in relation to your topic.
  Depending on your ability, you may hit or miss your desired search results.
  You may have difficulty forming a search based on a broad legal issue.
• LexisNexis & Westlaw Search Tips & Strategies:
  
  Understand terms & Connectors
  
  Use synonyms
  Use wild cards ! *
  Use singular word forms
  Grammatical Connectors /s /p
  Numerical Connectors w/5
  Connector and generally too large
  Remember connector or
  Connector not
  
  Understand processing priority
  Use quotation marks
  Use parentheses
  
  Use focus and locate when you have search results.
  
  Use “help” numbers for query formulation assistance.

• If you do not find what you are looking for, log off, and rethink your strategy off-line. It’s cheaper!

Other Databases

• Become familiar with the Law Library databases

• Try the Journals A to Z subject categories

• Look for topic-specific databases

• Use this opportunity to explore these databases for free!

Internet

• Set a specific time limit for on-line searching.

• Become familiar with search engines & develop favorites.

• Use the first 20 hits from a search engine, and if unsuccessful, change your search.

• Bookmark good, frequently used web-sites.

• Organize your bookmarks.

• Use the Law Library Home page as a starting point.

  Remember, for all on-line searching, If your search strategy is not working, exit and re-think the problem off-line.
V. Update and Analyze Your Sources

- How good are your sources?
- How current are your sources?
  How are they updated?
  How frequently are they updated?
- How current do they need to be?
- Have you updated your research appropriately?
  Pocket parts, supplements, update looseleaf sections, advance sheets, legislative update services
  Shepard’s and/or other citators
  On-line updating
- Which sources did you find most useful and why?
- How did print and computer sources compare?
- What did you learn to make your next research projects faster and easier?
- Keep a DETAILED, DATED RESEARCH LOG indicating what sources you used, where you found them etc.