

Legal Research Strategy Chart Overview

by William Magee

I designed this chart for a basic overview of the legal research process. It is not geared to any expert or jurisdictional research. I assigned four steps to remind students to think about a research plan before rushing to online sources. In an age of Internet dominance, too many students fuse step one and two and fail to think what resource is best for a specific question or task before selecting a format. This chart prompts them to take two steps for a more efficient and correct source choice. It also informs them that combining sources and formats is also appropriate. Step three reminds them to ensure that the law they find is still correct and where to locate that information. Step four encourages the student to anticipate changes through clipping services and practitioner periodicals.

I have posted this chart on *Blackboard* for the 1L's use as they research for their appellate drafting assignment. I also included it in a PowerPoint presentation entitled *Outthink, Outplan & Outsearch*. I use this PowerPoint in a spring clinic for summer associate and graduating student training. At the end of training, I provide to each student this chart as a laminated two-sided three-hole punched document that a student can use anywhere. My colleague recently incorporated it into her own PowerPoint she presented to the 1L's on strategies for legal research. This chart served as a marketing tool that prompted two professors to invite me to conduct a legal research strategy session in their appellate advocacy classes. A professor who teaches Virginia civil procedure asked me to adapt this chart for Virginia legal research. I presented it in his class during a session on the same topic and distributed these newly created charts at the training's conclusion.