

Searching the Wisconsin Statutes and other Revisor's Bureau NXT Infobases Connie Von Der Heide, Wisconsin State Law Library – WAPL, May 3, 2007

To get this same information online, use the Help link in the upper right corner of any Infobase webpage. See especially “Searching,” which provides a chart of Boolean search syntax. A copy of the syntax chart is also in this handout. It’s helpful to have at hand when searching.

The screen contains a Banner frame (across the top), a Table of Contents frame (left sidebar) with two tabs called HTML and JAVA, and the Results frame (the big white area).

In the Banner area, you can choose different search forms.

- Quick Search box, the default, is often the best and most efficient choice. You CAN use Boolean search syntax here, and I recommend doing so.
- Quick Find will list several boxes in which you can enter a specific section number for a specific resource, such as Wis. Statutes or Admin Code. Follow the examples provided in each box when setting up your search.
- Boolean search form displays the same Boolean search syntax guide that’s found in the Help section.
- Advanced search form is basically a guided Boolean search.

NOTE: When using either Boolean or Advanced search, be sure to read and heed the fine print: “You can search a subset of the site by selecting the JAVA tab in the [Table of Contents] frame on the left and choosing sections in the table of contents by checking the box next to the desired sections.” This means you can search just a portion of the Statutes if you wish, all the way down to the individual section. Could definitely be useful. However, it also means that anytime you use the Boolean or Advanced search form, you must check the boxes next to the sources you wish to search, or else the search will run in ALL NXT databases on the entire website—including all Statutes back to 1989! If you forget, you might be reminded when your search retrieves literally hundreds of hits.

Searching: Helpful Hints

*Use the asterisk * to find all forms of your search words.* Unlike Westlaw or Lexis, NXT searching does not automatically retrieve plurals or possessives.

A search on contractor notice (i.e. the word contractor and the word notice anywhere in the same statute section) retrieves 105 sections.

A search on contractor* notice* (i.e. any form of the word contractor and any form of the word notice anywhere in the same statute section) retrieves 121 sections. Let’s refine it.

Use @ or / to tighten and/or order the proximity of your search words.

A search on “contractor* notice*”@5 (contractor* anywhere within 5 words of notice*) retrieves 19 sections.

A search on “contractor* notice*/5 (contractor* before and within 5 words of notice*) retrieves 13 sections.

Use quotation marks to search multiple terms as a single phrase.

A search on open meeting* (open and meeting* anywhere in the same section) retrieves 118 sections, while a search on the phrase “open meeting*” retrieves 26 sections.

Viewing the Results

The results of your search are displayed in the Results frame. Up to 20 results appear on the screen. If there are more than 20, scroll to the bottom of the page and click “more.”

In the NXT databases, a “result” or “document” is an entire statute or Admin Code section, or AG opinion - a welcome change from the “record” concept of the old search software, which chopped things up rather arbitrarily and required a lot of scrolling and clicking “More.” (Remember that? Yuck!)

Within each result, up to 9 hits are displayed, with short snippets of surrounding text or “document excerpts.” The default Document Excerpt display setting is “Short.” You can change this to None, Medium, or Long by clicking on the Document Excerpts menu, found in the upper right corner of any Results frame.

Note: The arbitrary display limit of 9 hits in a document (set by the software vendor, not RSB), means that all hits might not be shown on the results screen. Whenever the maximum 9 hits are displayed, you’ll have to double check for more by looking at the full text of the statute section. (Example: In the results of the above “open meeting*” search, see section 19.81.)

At the top of the Results frame are four tabs:

- Document: displays the full text statute section (you must first choose a document from the Results list.)
- Results: self-explanatory.
- Doc/Results: splits the Results frame into two sections, half Document and half Results.
- Search Form: simply displays the Quick Search form.

Just above the Search Form tab is a link called Clear Search, which does just that although the text of the last document you viewed remains in the Results frame.

To display the full text of a document, click the Statute section number to go to the beginning of that statute section, or click any “hit” search term to go to that part of the statute section.

Whenever you’re in a “Document” or “Docs/Results” display, another set of tabs appears.

- Sync Contents causes the Table of Contents display to expand or collapse, in order to show where the currently displayed document is in the hierarchy of the infobase you’re using.
- Doc: go to next or previous document in context (won’t necessarily contain any hits)
- Hit: go to Next or Previous hit. This button works within the current document only. To view hits in the next or previous document that contains any, use Hit Doc.
- Hit Doc: go to Next/Previous document containing any hits.
- Clear Highlights will remove the highlighting on your search terms. It’s not a toggle button; to get the highlighting back, either click previous Hit Doc and then Next Hit Doc to get back to the one you were looking at; or, go back to the Results list and select your document again.
- Toggle Hidden will hide or re-display any citation lines, PDF icons and other non-text info.
- Print just activates the print function of your browser.

Searching Wisconsin Legislature NXT Infobases

(See link to complete “Help” information in the upper right corner of any Infobase webpage.)

Search Syntax Summary

Operator	Example	Result
And	one two one & two one and two	Finds documents with both 'one' and 'two'.
Or	me you me or you	Finds documents with either 'me' or 'you'.
Not	^him not him	Finds documents that don't contain 'him'.
Exclusive or	apples ~ oranges apples xor oranges	Finds documents with either 'apples' or 'oranges', but not both.
Phrase	"to be or not"	Finds documents with the exact phrase 'to be or not'.
Single character wildcard	wom?n th??	Finds documents with 'woman', 'women', etc., or 'this', 'that', 'them', etc.
Multiple character wildcard	a*n work*	Finds documents with 'an', 'addition', 'assign', etc., or 'work', 'works', 'working', etc.
Ordered proximity	"corporate tax law"/10	Finds documents with 'corporate', 'tax' and 'law' within 10 words, in the order given.
Unordered proximity	"technical resource acquisition"@5	Finds documents with 'technical', 'resource' and 'acquisition' within 5 words, in any order.
Stemming (word form)	run%	Finds documents with 'run', 'ran', 'runs', and 'running'.
Synonym	alert\$	Finds documents with 'alert', 'active', 'aware', 'quick', etc.