

# Legal Writing & Research: Legal Citators, Shepard's & KeyCite

Citators are a general class of research materials designed to help you find sources that cite a source that you have identified. The two basic uses for Shepard's and KeyCite are:

1. *Verification*: to make sure that precedent you are analyzing remains good law, i.e., that it has not been overturned; and
2. *Research*: to find other sources that cite to the legal material you are analyzing, in the hopes that these new sources deal with similar subjects as or shed further light on the law you have already found.

While you will use Shepard's and KeyCite to look up, or "cite," cases, understand that you can also use both services to find materials that have cited other research sources, including statutes and some secondary sources.

## ***Online Legal Citators—Treatment Signals***

Remember: when you find or pull up a case or other legal resource on either Lexis or Westlaw, there is a strong likelihood that you will see the citator symbol. These symbols are designed to indicate a snapshot, vague, general precedential value of the case being researched. On both services, the symbols should remind you of the importance of citing the case.

### **Shepard's Signals on Lexis:**



**Strong Negative Treatment, including no longer good law**



**Some Negative Treatment for a statute**



**Validity questioned**



**Some Negative Treatment**



**Citing references have some positive treatment**



**Citing references provide analysis that is neither positive nor negative**



**Citing references exist but those references are not primary law sources**

### **KeyCite Symbols on Westlaw:**



**Some Negative Treatment**

**Strong Negative Treatment, No longer good law for AT LEAST ONE point**

**Document has been appealed**