

Online Records: Search Tips and FAQ

Search Tips

Letters and numbers

- The system is case sensitive. (It does matter whether you search using upper case or lower case letters or too many spaces.)
- When searching for an appellate case number that includes zero 0, be sure to type the number 0 rather than the letter O.

Appellate court case numbers

- An Iowa appellate court case number consists of a two-digit prefix, which indicates the year, followed by four digits. Example: 99-0101 or 00-1212. An appellate court case number can include the number 0, but not the letter O. Please note that if a case is transferred to the Court of Appeals, the Court of Appeals will assign a separate number. However, all searches must use the original Supreme Court docket number.

Searching by case caption

- Case caption is a short case title, i.e., Doe v. Smith or State v. Jones.
- When searching by the short case caption do not use first names.
- The system is case sensitive. Proper capitalization, spelling and spacing is necessary.

Searching by party or attorney

- Be sure to spell the name correctly. The system searches for exactly what you enter. (It does not do a "sounds like" search)
- When you search by party or attorney name, the system returns matches that consist of or begin with the text you enter in each field. For example, if you enter "Dan" in the last name field, the system might return Daniels, Danielson, Daniel, Danker, Dancers. To find every name that contains "Dan" regardless of the text position, search by %dan.
- If you enter Brown in the last name field and D in the first name field the system will return all the parties and/or attorneys with the last name Brown and a first name beginning with a D. If you search by first name initial, do not enter a period after the initial.

If you do not know the case number:

- Search by party. Search by a party's name. A list of all cases with parties matching your information will be displayed, or
- Search by attorney. Search by an attorney's name or by a law firm name. A list of all the cases with attorneys that match your information will be displayed

What if I only know part of the case title?

Use the "last name/firm" option on the search screen. Search by the last name or the organization name of either party. A list of all cases containing your search information will be displayed.

Can I find all cases for a particular attorney?

Use the "last name/firm" search options. Search by the attorney name, and a list of all the cases with an attorney by that name will be displayed.

Can I find all cases for a particular party?

Use the "last name/firm" option. Search by a party name, and a list of all cases with a party by that name will be displayed.

Appellate Case Search Tips

You may access the following appellate case information as part of our basic free service: trial court and county, party and attorney information, docket entries, and dispositions.

You may search by:

- Appellate docket number. If you know the appellate case number this is the fastest way to find a case.
- Short case title. You must accurately input the correct capitalization, punctuation and spacing.
- Last name/firm. A list of all the cases with the name will be displayed regardless of parties' role in the case.

The "advanced case search" will allow you to access additional appellate case information, including:

- Role: This describes the role of the party in the case on appeal.
- Issues: Issues is a brief description of the legal questions or fields of law raised by the parties in a particular case on appeal.
- Case Type: Case type would be either civil or criminal.
- Current Status: The current status or milestone in the case on appeal.
- Event: Allows you to search for all cases with a specific docket event.
- Filed Between: This is the date range searched in which the docket event was filed.

FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

May I see the full text of papers filed online?

This site does not provide access to the full text of any document. The Iowa court system does not yet maintain electronic copies of documents. To obtain a copy of a particular court record, you must contact the clerk of court's office in the county where the case is filed and pay a copy fee.

Why can't I find a recent traffic citation?

Sometimes citations issued by law enforcement are not filed in the clerk of court offices right away, and therefore, the information from the citation does not show up immediately on this site. It may take as long as 10 to 14 days before the information is posted on the docket.

Do entries of documents filed with the clerk appear on this site as soon as the documents are filed?

Our clerk of court offices endeavor to enter case information on the docket as soon as possible. But because our clerks' offices are busy handling other important court duties, documents may not be entered into this system for a few days after their receipt. This delay does not affect the timeliness of the filing.

How far back in time does the online docket show case information?

We changed from a paper docket to an electronic docket from 1991 to 1998. Depending on the county, information about cases filed before this change may not be available on this site and

may exist in paper format only. Electronic records for the appellate courts date back to 1998. For a county-by-county list of the electronic docket start-up dates—[County Start Date Index](#).

Why do some records show a case date of 1901?

Some clerk of court offices have entered information from earlier onto the system to maintain financial records. These cases will appear with a 01/01/1901 case initiation date.

Why can't I find a case?

There are several possible reasons why you may not be able to find a particular case:

- Search errors: Make sure you are entering the correct case number and that names and case title or caption are spelled correctly.
- See Search Tips for more assistance.
- Cases that are confidential by law are not available on this website. Any search for a confidential case will result in a "no records found matching your search criteria" message.

Correction of Errors

Information in the court docket, including the information presented on Iowa Courts Online ©, cannot be changed without a court order. If you believe information in the docket is inaccurate or is required by law to be confidential, you should provide a written request for correction to the clerk of court office in the county where the case record is filed. If an error exists, the clerk will bring the matter to the attention of a judge.

Is there a procedure to make my records confidential and remove them from this site?

In general, Iowa law does not provide a procedure for sealing or removing records from public access. There are a few exceptions. Certain juvenile delinquency records may be sealed by court order. Also, the court can order a clerk to expunge records in certain criminal cases in which a defendant received a deferred judgment and fully complied with the conditions attached to such judgment. Unless there is a legal basis for removing a public record from this site, it will remain on the site indefinitely.