Legal topics can affect people's rights, responsibilities and decisions. If you publish content about the law, readers need to see where your information came from, how current it is and what it can—and cannot—tell them. Clear citations help readers check claims for themselves and make your content more transparent.

This guide explains how to find and cite **legal information sources**, handle changes in the law, write responsible disclaimers and keep broken links from undermining trust. It is intended for publishers and writers, not as guidance on any individual legal issue.

Start with reliable legal information sources

Not all sources carry the same weight. An official statute or court judgment is different from a news article explaining it. Before relying on a source, consider who published it, what authority it has and whether it covers the point you want to make.

- **Legislation:** Use legislation.gov.uk for UK legislation and check whether you are looking at the version in force on the relevant date. A page may show amendments or versions that have not yet been incorporated into the main text.
- **Courts and tribunals:** Where available, use the judgment itself or an official court publication. Note the court, case name, date and neutral citation.
- **Government and public bodies:** GOV.UK and relevant government departments can explain official processes, but guidance is not always the same as legislation.
- **Regulators:** Use a regulator's own material when describing its rules, powers or expectations. For example, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is a regulator in the UK financial services sector. Its guidance and rules should be identified as FCA material, not presented as a court's interpretation of the law.
- **Secondary sources:** Books, legal journals, professional organisations and reputable news outlets can help explain complex issues. Check their references and use primary sources to verify important legal claims where possible.

A source can be reputable and still be unsuitable for a particular claim. A general government webpage may describe a process in plain English, while the precise legal rule appears in legislation or a judgment. Match the source to the statement, and avoid making a broad claim from a source that addresses only a narrow situation.

Make citations specific and easy to check

A citation should let readers find the material you used without having to guess. Link directly to the relevant page or document rather than to a homepage or search results. For a long document, identify the section, paragraph or page containing the point.

Source type Useful details to include What to check Legislation Title, year, section or regulation, and a link Jurisdiction, amendments and version date Court judgment Case name, neutral citation, court, date and link Whether the decision is final, appealed or later treated differently Regulator material Regulator, document or webpage title, publication date and link Whether it is a rule, formal guidance, consultation or general explanation Commentary or news Author, title, publisher, date and link What primary material supports the account

Put a citation close to the claim it supports. A list of links at the end can be useful, but it should not leave readers wondering which source backs which statement. If a paragraph contains several claims, cite each relevant source rather than adding one link that appears to support everything.

When quoting, use quotation marks, reproduce the wording accurately and identify the source. Keep quotations proportionate and explain why they matter. If you summarise rather than quote, make clear that it is a summary and do not make the source sound more definite than it is.

Check current law before publishing

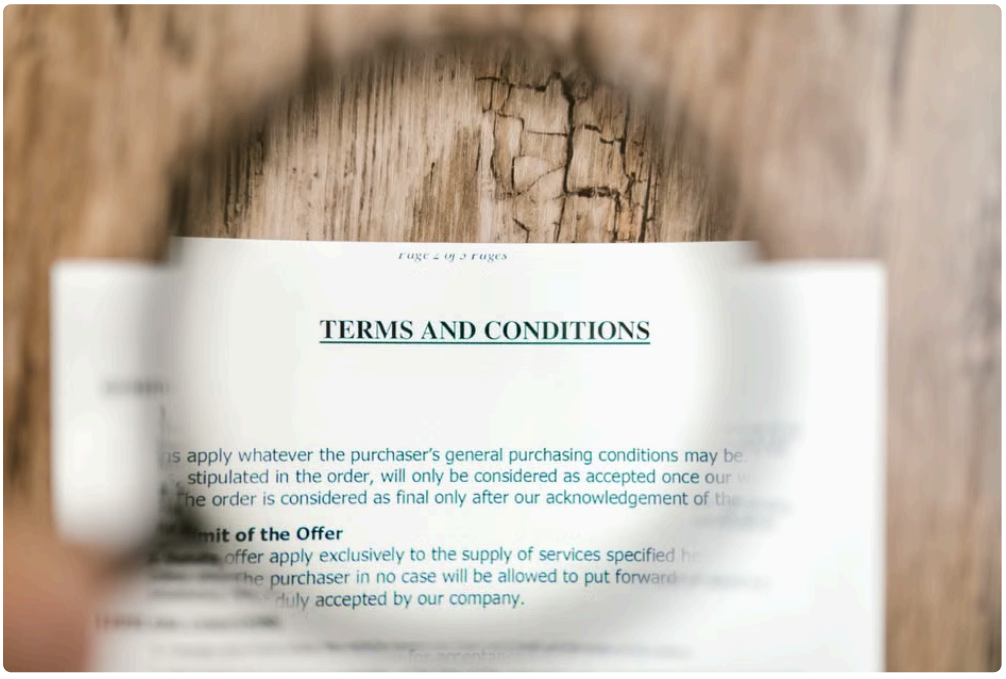
Legal material can change through new legislation, amendments, court decisions and updated regulator publications. A page that was accurate when first written may become incomplete or out of date. Writers should **check current law** before publication and set a process for reviewing important pages afterwards.

Record when you checked your sources. A simple “Last reviewed” date can help readers understand when the page was examined, but it should reflect a real review—not just a date changed to make the page look fresh. If the law or a key source changes, update the relevant explanation and note the change where it is useful to readers.

A practical source-checking routine

1. Write down each legal claim in the draft that needs support.
2. Find the most authoritative source available for each claim.
3. Check the source’s date, jurisdiction and status.
4. Compare your wording with the source. Narrow or qualify the wording if the source supports less than you first thought.
5. Open every link and confirm it leads to the cited material.
6. Save the source details and review date so another editor can repeat the check.

Where a point is contested, unsettled or dependent on specific facts, say so. Avoid presenting one judgment or commentary article as the final word if later decisions, appeals or statutory changes may affect the position. If you cannot verify a claim, remove it or explain the limits of what you have found.



Explain the difference between information and advice

Legal content on a general website should be clear about its purpose. A useful statement is that the material provides general information, is not tailored to a reader's circumstances and should not be treated as legal advice. The wording should fit the actual content: a disclaimer cannot turn personalised recommendations into neutral information.

Use plain language and place the notice where readers can see it. Avoid relying on a footer alone, especially on pages likely to be read independently from search results. Where appropriate, explain that readers may need to consult a qualified professional about their own situation. Do not imply that every reader needs one, or promise a particular result.

For example:

"This article provides general information only. It is not legal advice and does not take account of your individual circumstances. Laws and procedures can change. Check the relevant current sources and consider getting independent help if you need support with a specific situation."

This kind of wording is a boundary, not a substitute for careful research. It should sit alongside accurate citations, clear explanations and an honest account of uncertainty. Avoid phrases such as "you will win", "you are definitely entitled to" or "this always applies" unless the source genuinely supports that level of certainty and the context permits it.

Use liability limitation language carefully

Publishers sometimes include a limitation of liability statement to explain the limits of the material and the publisher's role. Such wording should be readable, proportionate and consistent with the rest of the page. It should not suggest that a publisher can exclude every legal responsibility simply by adding a disclaimer.

For example, a site might say that it takes reasonable care to keep information accurate but cannot guarantee that every page is complete or up to date. It can also explain that the content is not a substitute for advice based on a person's circumstances. Avoid blanket claims that the publisher accepts "no liability whatsoever", particularly if they could mislead readers about their rights or the effect of the wording.

If the site earns money through advertising, referrals or affiliate links, disclose that clearly. For instance, a publisher participating in the Amazon Services LLC Associates Program may receive a commission from qualifying purchases. If a page contains links through Amazon Associates to Amazon.com, explain the commercial relationship near the links or in a prominent disclosure that readers can find before clicking.



Affiliate disclosures are not legal citations, and they do not validate the surrounding content. Keep commercial messages separate from factual claims, and do not let a commission influence how a legal source is described. If a publisher such as Help & Advice offers general legal information alongside commercial links, readers should be able to distinguish the information, the publisher's role and any paid relationship.

Build trust with working links and useful 404 pages

A broken citation can make otherwise careful content difficult to verify. It may also leave readers unsure whether the source has moved, the page has been removed or the publisher has stopped maintaining the article. Check links before publication and revisit them during scheduled reviews.

When a cited page returns a 404 error, do not silently replace it with an unrelated page. Search the issuing body's site for the document, look for an official archive or locate another authoritative copy. If the original is no longer available, update the citation and explain any limitation that matters. For a withdrawn or superseded document, say that it has been withdrawn or replaced rather than presenting it as current.

A useful 404 page should reassure readers without pretending the missing page still exists. Include a short explanation, a working route back to the article or site, and clear navigation to relevant sections. A search box, a link to the homepage and a way to report a broken link can help. Avoid sending readers to a sales page or making them repeat a search without guidance.

What a helpful 404 page can include

- A plain statement that the page could not be found.
- A link back to the article or topic area, where available.
- Search or navigation options that work on mobile as well as desktop.
- A contact route for reporting a broken source or link.

Good navigation is part of responsible legal content. Readers should be able to return to the explanation they were reading, find related information and understand whether a page has moved. Broken links should

be treated as an editorial issue, not merely a technical inconvenience.

Do your own research, not just repeat another page

Responsible legal content **use at your own risk disclaimer** means checking the underlying sources rather than copying another publisher's summary. A second-hand explanation may omit a qualification, rely on an old version of the law or describe a different jurisdiction. Even where you credit the original author, that does not establish that the claim is correct or current.

Use other writers' work as a starting point for questions, not as a replacement for verification. Follow their citations, check the primary material and write your own explanation. If you cannot access or confidently interpret a source, be transparent about that limitation and avoid overstating what it says.

Keep a research record: the links consulted, dates accessed, relevant sections and any unresolved questions. This makes future updates easier and helps editors distinguish verified facts from assumptions. For high-impact or technically complex material, arrange an appropriate editorial or professional review rather than implying that a general website has checked every reader's circumstances.

What to do next

Before publishing, run through this final check:

- Does every important legal claim have a relevant, working citation?
- Have you checked current law and identified the date of your review?
- Are facts, interpretation and uncertainty clearly distinguished?
- Does the page say that it provides information rather than advice tailored to the reader?
- Are any liability limits and commercial or affiliate relationships explained plainly?
- Can readers recover their route if a link fails, including through a helpful 404 page?

Clear sources, careful wording and a realistic update process help readers assess legal content for themselves. They do not guarantee that every interpretation is right or that the law will remain unchanged. The aim is to make claims traceable, limits visible and further research straightforward.