

## I have the internet – who needs a lawyer?



The volume and variety of information available on the internet has inspired many to adopt a do-it-yourself approach to solving everyday problems, from fixing a leaky faucet to treating poison ivy. Some people are no longer willing to believe that legal information is any more mysterious or challenging than any other kind of knowledge. As the percentage of people eager to participate in solving their own legal problems has grown, online legal information has proliferated. But can you trust it?

The answer is the same as for any kind of internet content: there is high-quality information available, but benefitting from it requires being an educated consumer. Because different countries – and different jurisdictions within countries – have different laws, you will need to find information specific to your own jurisdiction (in Canada, that’s typically your province; though some areas of law, like criminal law, are consistent across the country). You should also be mindful of how recent the information is, since the law can change frequently.

Finally, as with all online information, you should consider the trustworthiness of the source. Are you reading a guide that is hosted by the court itself or by a government ministry? That’s likely reliable, as are cases published by a government source. Greater caution will be needed, however, if you’ve found a sample document – such as for a will or a separation agreement on a privately-owned self-help site.

Beyond assessing the reliability of information, a larger challenge is determining how the information applies to you. Modern lives are diverse and complicated, and a one-size-fits-all DIY document can be dangerously ill-suited to your specific situation. Because of the experience that comes with assisting others, lawyers develop an in-depth understanding of the range of legal solutions available, and of the way in which they apply in diverse situations. Especially for legal issues where the financial stakes are high, educating yourself and seeking the guidance of a lawyer offers the best results.

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