



Accessing PACER

<http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov/>

Research Guide

Last Updated: October, 2010

Scope: This guide describes how to sign-up for and use PACER (Public Access to Court Electronic Records).

What is PACER?

PACER is an online database system for retrieving court docket information in federal cases. Through PACER you can access documents from all of the district courts, most of the appellate courts (with the exception of the U.S. Federal Circuit Court of Appeals) and all of the bankruptcy courts. Documents from the United States Supreme Court are not available through PACER. For a list of courts that do not participate in PACER see: <http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/miss-court.pl>.

What kind of information can I find on PACER?

For a federal case you may find:

- A list of all parties and participants, including judges, trustees, and attorneys;
- Case details, such as the nature of the case, causes of action, and dollar demand;
- A chronology of dates of case events, such as filings and hearings;
- A claims registry;
- A listing of new cases each day;
- Appellate court opinions;
- Types of documents filed for certain cases;
- Judgments or case status;
- Links to case documents.

How do I access PACER?

If you have your own PACER account, you can access PACER from any computer with internet access. Simply go to <https://pacer.login.uscourts.gov/> to log-in. (See below for instructions on how to set-up your own account.)

If you do not have a PACER account, and do not want to sign up for one, you can access PACER for free at these federal courts in San Diego:

U.S. District Court
Southern District of California
Office of the Clerk
880 Front Street, Suite 4290
San Diego, CA 92101
Hours: Mon - Fri, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

U.S. Bankruptcy Court
Southern District of California
Jacob Weinberger United States Courthouse
325 West F Street
San Diego, CA 92101
Hours: Mon - Fri, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

One final option for accessing specific documents on PACER is to use the document delivery service that we offer at the San Diego County Public Law Library. You will need to provide the case number and specific information about the document. The cost for this service is a minimum of \$15 per document requested. Please see the document requests page on our website for more information on this service:

http://www.sdcpl.org/services/document_requests.htm

How do I sign-up for my own PACER account?

To sign-up for a PACER account, fill-in the online PACER registration form at:

<https://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov/psco/cgi-bin/regform.pl>.

You will need to provide your name, address, phone number, and email address to register. You will have the option of providing a credit card. If you provide a credit card, you will receive an email with directions on how to retrieve your login and password the same day. If you do not provide a credit card, the login and password will be sent to you by U.S. mail. It can take between 7-10 days to receive your password by mail. For security reasons, logins and passwords cannot be emailed, faxed, or given over the phone.

How much does it cost?

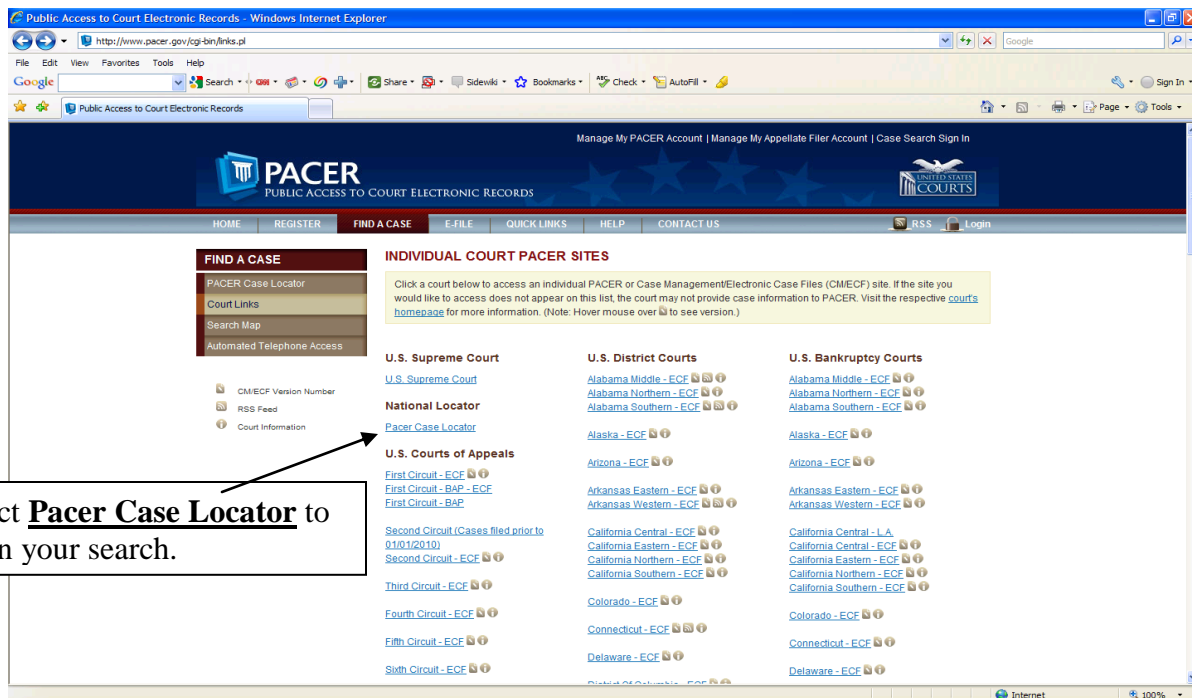
There is no charge to register for an individual PACER account. However, you will be charged when you search PACER. The current charge is \$0.08 per page retrieved. This charge applies to the pages of search results and to the pages of documents you view, download, or print. The cost to access a single document is capped at \$2.40, which is the equivalent of 30 pages. The cap does not apply to name searches, reports that are not case-specific, and transcripts of federal court proceedings.

PACER will bill you on a quarterly basis for use of the service. If your usage costs are less than \$10 in a quarter, fees for that quarter will be waived, effectively making the service free for many users.

For more information about cost and billing, see the PACER FAQ at <http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov/faq.html>.

How do I start a search?

Go to <https://pacer.login.uscourts.gov/> and log-in to your PACER account. After you have logged-in, you will see the following search screen:



From the main search screen depicted above, you can also select the specific court you want to search by clicking on the link for that court. The link will take you directly to that court's website. Some court websites are not easy to use and require you to click through multiple links before getting to the search screen. We recommend you start your search with the **Pacer Case Locator**.

The **Pacer Case Locator** search screen looks like this:

The screenshot shows the PACER Case Locator search interface in a Windows Internet Explorer browser. The page has a blue header with the PACER logo and navigation links: Court Information, Statistics, My Account, and Logout. Below the header are tabs for 'All Courts', 'Appellate', 'Bankruptcy', 'Civil', 'Criminal', and 'Multi-District Litigation'. The 'All Courts' tab is selected, and the 'Advanced Search' link is highlighted. The search form includes a 'Region' dropdown menu (set to 'All Courts'), a 'Case Number' field, a 'Party Search' section with a 'Party Name' field and an 'Exact Matches Only' checkbox, and 'Search' and 'Clear' buttons. A 'Down Time Notice' is visible at the bottom of the search area.

From this screen, you can search all federal courts, or search a specific type of court by selecting one of the tabs at the top of the screen.

This is the basic search screen. If you select the Advanced Search link, you can narrow your search by case title or filing date.

From the **Pacer Case Locator** page, if you select the **Civil** tab, the search screen looks like this: (note: this is the Advanced Search screen)

The screenshot shows the PACER Case Locator search interface with the 'Civil' tab selected. The 'Basic Search' link is highlighted. The search form includes a 'Region' dropdown menu (set to 'California'), a 'Case Number' field, a 'Case Title' field, a 'Nature of Suit' dropdown menu (set to '895 Freedom of Information Act'), 'Date Filed' and 'Date Closed' fields, and a 'Party Search' section. The 'Nature of Suit' dropdown menu is open, showing options: 892 Economic Stabilization Act, 893 Environmental Matters, 894 Energy Allocation Act, and 895 Freedom of Information Act. The 'Date Filed' field is set to '01/01/2005'. 'Search' and 'Clear' buttons are at the bottom.

Notice that you can search all California federal civil cases, or you can narrow your search by district.

You can also search by the nature of the case.

As shown here, you can pull-up all Freedom of Information Act cases that were filed in California from January 1, 2005, to the present.

For more information about searching PACER, see the PACER user manual: <http://www.pacer.gov/documents/pacermanual.pdf>