

Of all the considerations that go into building Alexsei, memo quality is of supreme importance. In fact, this is the single metric on which most of our time, energy, and resources are focused. Without high-quality answers, the other benefits of using artificial intelligence—such as reduced cost and turnaround times—are pointless.

While there are many factors that influence memo quality, there is one that is largely out of our control: how the legal question is phrased. Of course, a single legal question can be asked in many ways. And while Alexsei is designed to account for this, sometimes a question phrased one way results in a higher quality memo than a question phrased another way. As such, we decided to put together this short guide to asking good questions when using Alexsei.

The one rule and four guidelines

There is only 1 rule that must be followed when a user asks Alexsei a question. If it isn't followed, the question will be returned and marked as *unanswerable*. There are also 4 guidelines that should be followed to maximize memo quality, although compliance with these guidelines isn't necessary.

As a quick reference, here is the rule and guidelines:

1. *Questions must be answerable in reference to source law only (The only rule).*
2. *Facts should be distinct from the issue statement.*
3. *The more specific the question, the more specific the answer.*
4. *Ask a general question if you want a general answer.*
5. *Use precise legal language.*

1. Questions must be answerable in reference to source law only (the only rule)

Rarely, but on occasion, a user may ask a question that is either a best practices question or a question that is more of a business question than a legal question. Unfortunately, Alexsei does not answer these sorts of questions.

As a rule of thumb, if you believe that reference to source law is entirely sufficient to answer your question, you are probably right, and your question is unlikely to be returned.

2. Facts should be distinct from the issue statement

When submitting a legal question to [Alexsei](#), users are provided with a form field for the legal question and a form field for any background facts. Often, users include both facts and legal questions as a single entry in the question form field. In these cases, there is a risk that the answer will not be as helpful as it would have been had the user properly separated out the facts from the issue statement.

This is true for two reasons.

First, if users don't properly separate out facts from the legal question, we are often forced to do it on the backend manually before running the question through our AI, and therefore risk misinterpreting the precise legal question.

Second, the law is inherently objective—it is an abstraction that is broadly applicable to

certain facts. Facts, on the other hand, are specific to a subject. Accordingly, facts and law consist of distinct domains, although related. As such, when an issue statement is provided distinct from facts, properly identifying the most applicable source law become significantly easier.

3. The more specific the question, the more specific the answer

As a rule of thumb, the level of generality or specificity of an Alexsei answer will correspond to the level of generality or specificity of the question.

When a question is intentionally general or intentionally specific, the best answer will likely be helpful. However, when the question is unintentionally general, even the best answer will likely fall short of what the lawyer was looking for. Formulating a specific legal question does require some general knowledge of the area of law, which, on occasion, requires some work up-front. One solution to this, however, is to start out by intentionally asking Alexsei a general question (Seen #3 below).

4. Ask a general question if you want a general answer

As previously noted, specific questions are more likely to result in a helpful memo than general questions. However, specific questions are not always possible for several reasons, one of which is a lack of understanding of the area of law. In these cases, intentionally asking a general question is entirely appropriate, and will provide a good base from which more specific questions can be formulated. In fact, we often see a series of questions from a user

follow this pattern—progressing from the general to the specific—reflecting the natural development of the user’s understanding of the relevant law.

5. Use precise legal language

As all legal professionals know, precision of language is critical. Not surprisingly, this still holds true when asking Alexsei a legal question. For example, if a user has a question about breach of contract, and uses the word “rescission” in the question when they really meant “repudiation,” the answer returned is going to be significantly different than what they were expecting (not surprisingly!). In some instances, being precise in your questions may require some up-front work. Most of the time, however, precision can be achieved simply by paying close attention to your question, and double checking the meaning of any obscure words or phrases where possible.

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