

Hugh & Hazel Darling Law Library

UCLA School of Law

Research Guide Series

HOW TO READ A LEGAL CITATION

A citation (or cite) in legal terminology is a reference to a specific legal source, such as a constitution, a statute, a reported case, a treatise, or a law review article. A standard citation includes first the volume number, then the title of the source, (usually abbreviated) and lastly, a page or section number.

CASES

Case citations designate the **volume number** of the reporter in which the case appears, the **name of the reporter**, the **page on which the case begins**, and the **year the decision was rendered**. Thus, each citation is unique. Cases, or judicial opinions, can be published by more than one publisher. If this occurs, the case name may be followed by one or more “parallel citations”. The official reporter is the one with whose publisher the court has contracted to publish the reports; any other citation is called “unofficial.” (Sometimes a case will have only an unofficial citation, such as in the *Federal Reporter*; then the “unofficial” cite will be listed alone.) The text of the opinions will be the same in the official or unofficial sources, but the unofficial may contain additional editorial features which differ from the official.

In **California**, the State Supreme Court cases are published officially in the *California Reports*, series 1-4; the Court of Appeals cases are officially published in the *California Appellate Reports*, series 1-4. Unofficial reports are published by West; Supreme Court and Appellate Court decisions are published together in the *West’s California Reporter*, series 1, 2 & 3. The Supreme Court decisions are also published in the *Pacific Reporter*, series 1, 2 & 3.

Here are examples of citations for California:

CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT

<u>Names of Parties</u>	<u>Official Citation</u>	<u>Parallel Citations</u>
Lugosi v. Universal Plaintiff Defendant	25 C.3d 813 Vol. Cal. Reports, Page 3 rd Series	603 P.2d 425, 160 Cal.Rptr. 323 (1976) Pacific Reporter, California Year 2 nd Series Reporter

CALIFORNIA COURT OF APPEALS

<u>Names of Parties</u>	<u>Official Citation</u>	<u>Parallel Citations</u>
Daniels v. Weigum Plaintiff Defendant	194 Cal.App.2d 620 Vol. Cal. Appellate Page Reports, 2 nd Series	15 Cal.Rptr. 57 (1961) Vol. California Page Year Reporter





How to Read a Legal Citation

Federal cases are cited in the same format as California cases. For United States Supreme Court cases, the official reports, *United States Reports*, (abbreviated "US") are published by the U.S. Government. There are two parallel citations for Supreme Court cases: those published by West in the *Supreme Court Reporter* are abbreviated "S.Ct."; those published by LexisNexis, the *United States Supreme Court Reports, Lawyers' Edition*, are abbreviated "L.Ed." or "L.Ed. 2d" Court of Appeals cases, published only in West's *Federal Reporter*, are abbreviated "F.," "F. 2d." or "F. 3d." Federal District Court cases are published only in West's *Federal Supplement*, abbreviated "F. Supp." or "F. Supp. 2d"

UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT

<u>Names of Parties</u>	<u>Official Citation</u>	<u>Parallel Citations</u>
Roe v. Wade	410 U.S. 113	93 S.Ct. 705, 35 L. Ed. 2d 147
Plaintiff Defendant	Vol. U.S. Page Reports	Supreme Court, Reporter U.S. Supreme Court Reports, Lawyers' Ed.

CODES

Citations to **California Codes** do not begin with numbers; instead, the title of the code name is followed by the section number, the publisher, and the date of the volume (not the date the individual code section was enacted). Parallel cites are not used for the code, since there is no official code for California. The version of the unofficial code used (Deering's or West) is indicated in the date portion of the citation.

CALIFORNIA

California Rev. & Tax. Code	§ 2280	(Deering	20xx)
Subject Area (Title)	Section No.	Publisher	Date of Publication

Citations to the **United States Code** follow the same general format as cases; however, the first number refers to the title of the United States Code rather than a volume number, and the second number refers to the section number of the code rather than the page number. Parallel cites are not used for the code, since the numbering is uniform for both official and unofficial codes. The unofficial codes are designated by their own abbreviations, U.S.C.A. (West) and U.S.C.S. (LexisNexis).

FEDERAL

15	U.S.C.A.	§ 1601	(West	20xx)
Title No.	U.S.Code Annotated	Section No.	Publisher	Date of Publication





REFERENCE SOURCES

For more detailed instructions on how to cite legal materials, consult:

The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation, 18th ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Law Review Association, 2005).

LOCATION: KF 245 B58 (Reference Reading Room and Reserve)

Jessen, Edward W. *California Style Manual: A Handbook of Legal Style for California Courts and Lawyers*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: West Group, 2000).

LOCATION: KFC 75 C35 2000 (Reference Reading Room and Reserve)

The citations given herein follow *The Bluebook*. References to the titles of works within citations are almost always in abbreviated form, which are not always uniform from publication to publication. If you are unsure of an abbreviation, first check the work you are using to see if it has a table of abbreviations. If not, check the Reference Desk for guides to abbreviations. Two comprehensive works are:

Prince, Mary Miles. *Bieber's Dictionary of Legal Abbreviations: a reference guide for attorneys, legal secretaries, paralegals and law students*, 5th ed. (Buffalo, N.Y.: W. S. Hein, 2001).

LOCATION: KF 246 B46 2001 (Reference Desk, Main Reading Room and Level M)

Universal Citation Guide, Committee on Citation Formats, American Association of Law Libraries. (Buffalo, NY: William S. Hein, 2004).

LOCATION: KF 245 U57 2004 (Reserve)

ALWD Citation Manual: a professional system of citation, 3rd ed. Association of Legal Writing Directors and Darby Dickerson (New York, NY: Aspen, 2006)

LOCATION: KF 245 A45 2006 (Reference Desk & Reserve)

For foreign and international abbreviations:

Guide to foreign and international legal citations, 1st ed. (New York: NYU School of Law, 2006).

LOCATION: K 89 G85 2006 (Reference Desk)

