2014

How to Read a Legal Citation

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# How To Read A Legal Citation

## Guide Information

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**Tags:** cases, citation, legal research, legal writing  
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## Guide Index

- Home
- Federal Case Citations
- State Case Citations
- Statute Citations

## Case Citation, Generally

**General format:** Seasons Coal Co. v. Cleveland, 10 Ohio St. 3d 77 (1984)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case name</th>
<th>Volume No.</th>
<th>Reporter*</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seasons Coal Co. v. Cleveland.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ohio St 3d</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The title of the set of books containing the case. See below: Common Reporters for Federal Cases, Common Reporters for State Cases, Common Reporters for Ohio Cases.

## More Information

  The Supreme Court of Ohio
- Basic Legal Citation  
  [http://www.law.cornell.edu/citation/](http://www.law.cornell.edu/citation/)  
  via LII
- Bluebook Guide  
  Suffolk University Law School
- The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation, 1926-2005  
  Free historical PDF copies of The Bluebook.
- Cardiff Legal Abbreviations  
  [http://www.legalabbrevs.cardiff.ac.uk/](http://www.legalabbrevs.cardiff.ac.uk/)

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Text messages only: 216-539-3331
Federal Case Citations

U.S. Supreme Court Example


Case Name: Whetsel v. Sherwood.

Official Reporter Citations: The first number is the volume number, followed by the reporter abbreviation, followed by the page number. (537 U.S. 1182, 123 S.Ct. 1208, 154 L.Ed. 1013)

Parallel Citations: These parallel citations contain the same text of the opinion, but they are printed in reporters published by other companies, posted on the web or in LexisNexis or Westlaw. "WL" stands for WESTLAW and "U.S. LEXIS" stands for United States Supreme Court material within LexisNexis. These parallel citations are often available before the official reporter. (2003 WL 329302, 2003 U.S. LEXIS 1072, 71 U.S.L.W. (2003))

Year: The year the opinion was written.

Common Reporters for Federal Cases

Decisions of Federal Courts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REPORTER NAME</th>
<th>ABBREVIATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States Reports</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Court Reporter</td>
<td>S.Ct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Supreme Court Reports, Lawyer's Edition</td>
<td>L.Ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Supreme Court Reports, Lawyer's Edition, Second Series</td>
<td>L.Ed. 2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Law Week</td>
<td>U.S.L.W.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Reporter</td>
<td>F.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Reporter, Second Series</td>
<td>F.2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Reporter, Third Series</td>
<td>F.3d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bluebook Tip

Table T1.1 "Federal Judicial and Legislative Materials" in The Bluebook (19th edition) provides a complete list of federal reporter names and abbreviations.

Search the Library Catalog

- Title
- Author
- Keyword
- Subject
- Call Number

Search | Advanced Search

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State Case Citations

State Citation Example


This example shows an Ohio Supreme Court case citation.

Case Name: State ex rel Walls v. Ohio Masonic Home.

Official Reporter Citation: 98 Ohio St. 3d 285, Volume number, reporter abbreviation, and beginning page number of this decision.


Parallel Citations: The parallel citations contain the same text of the opinion, but they are printed in reporters published by other companies or posted on the web or within one of the major legal databases. In this example, there is no "WL" as the opinion of the court has been published in the print regional North Eastern reporter, 2nd Series (2d). Ohio LEXIS stands for Ohio Supreme Court material within LexisNexis. These parallel citations are often available before the official reporter.

Year: The year the opinion was written.

Common State Reporters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REPORTER NAME</th>
<th>ABBREVIATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Reporter</td>
<td>A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Reporter, Second Series</td>
<td>A.2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Reporter</td>
<td>Cal. Rptr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Reporter, Second Series</td>
<td>Cal. Rptr.2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Reporter, Third Series</td>
<td>Cal. Rptr.2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Eastern Reporter</td>
<td>N.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Eastern Reporter, Second Series</td>
<td>N.E.2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Western Reporter</td>
<td>N.W.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Western Reporter, Second Series</td>
<td>N.W.2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Supplement</td>
<td>N.Y.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Supplement, Second Series</td>
<td>N.Y.S.2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Reporter</td>
<td>P.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Reporter, Second Series</td>
<td>P.2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Reporter, Third Series</td>
<td>P.3d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Reporter</td>
<td>So.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Reporter, Second Series</td>
<td>So. 2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Eastern Reporter S.E.</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Eastern Reporter, Second Series S.E.2d</td>
<td>S.E.2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Western Reporter</td>
<td>S.W.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Western Reporter, Second Series</td>
<td>S.W.2d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Bluebook Tip**

*Table T1.3 States -- Ohio* in The Bluebook (19th edition) provides you with more information on Ohio citations and reporters.

### Ohio Reporters

**OHIO REPORTER NAME** | **ABBREVIATION**
--- | ---
Ohio State Reports | Ohio St.
Ohio State Reports, Second Series | Ohio St. 2d
Ohio State Reports, Third Series* | Ohio St. 3d
Ohio Appellate Reports | Ohio App.
Ohio Appellate Reports, Second Series | Ohio App. 2d
Ohio Appellate Reports, Third Series* | Ohio App. 3d
Ohio Miscellaneous | Ohio Misc.
Ohio Miscellaneous, Second Series* | Ohio Misc. 2d
Ohio Bar Reports | Ohio B.
Ohio Opinions, Second Series | Ohio Op. 2d
Ohio Opinions, Third Series | Ohio Op. 3d
Ohio Nisi Prius Reports | Ohio N.P.
Ohio Nisi Prius Reports, New Series | Ohio N.P. (n.s.)
Ohio Decisions | Ohio Dec.
Ohio Decisions, Reprint | Ohio Dec. Reprint
Ohio Circuit Court Decisions | Ohio C.C. Dec.
Ohio Circuit Reports (Jahn) | Ohio C.C.
Ohio Circuit Decisions | Ohio Cir. Dec.
Ohio Circuit Court Reports, New Series | Ohio C.C. (n.s.)
Unreported Ohio Appellate Cases | Ohio App. Unrep.

* The title on the physical volumes is Ohio Official Reports: Cases Argued and Determined in the Courts of Ohio.

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**Statute Citations**

**Statute Citation Example**

Example: *Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990* (The popular name of an act)

United States Code: Topical arrangement of United States statutes:


Title Number - Name of Code - Code section - Publisher - Date of volume or supplement.

If the cite is just to U.S.C., this means the official edition of the United States Code, published by the Government Printing Office.

Public Laws: When a law is passed, it is called a public law or slip law. The citation indicates the Congress number and the Public Law number:

- P.L. 101-336

Statutes at Large: The Statutes at Large contains the public laws in chronological order, with margin notations indicating where parts of the public law will appear in the U.S. Code.

- 103 Stat. 327

( Volume Number, Abbreviation for the Statutes at Large, Page Number).

For more information, see Legislative History - How newly enacted law are published.
Bluebook Tip
You can find additional information on statute citations in section R12 - Statutes of The Bluebook (19th edition).