

Reading a Legal Citation

Basic Format

Most legal citations consist of three parts:

- Volume number;
- Abbreviation of the name of the source; and
- Page or section number (§ denotes section).

For example, **163 U.S. 537** consists of the following:

163 = volume #	U.S. = United States Reports (source publication)	537 = starting page
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Court Cases

"Reporters" publish the opinions issued by a court in an ongoing series of volumes. While court cases are usually referenced by name (e.g. *Roe vs. Wade*), most legal materials also include a legal citation indicating where the decision is found in a specific reporter.

Example: **344 U.S. 1** cites the "Brown v. Board of Education" decision as published in *United States Reports*.

Parallel Citations

Citations to the same law or opinion published in different sources are called **parallel citations**. Many legal citations include references to several different sources. The first cite is considered the official or primary cite. The subsequent cites reference additional sources published by private companies which include additional editorial features.

Example: **Roe v. Wade (410 U.S. 113; 93 S. Ct. 705; 35 L. Ed. 2d 147)**

<u>Source Publication:</u>	<u>Parallel Cite</u>
<i>United States Reports</i> (US)	410 U.S. 113
<i>Supreme Court Reporter</i> (S.Ct.)	93 S. Ct. 705
<i>Lawyer's Edition</i> (L.Ed.)	35 L. Ed. 2d 147

To determine what the abbreviations for the source publications are, there are two very good texts available.

The Bluebook: a Uniform System of Citation, available for checkout at the South Omaha and Elkhorn Valley campus libraries, Call # 340.0148 B658 19th ed. This will help you determine what the abbreviation will be if you know the source.

Prince's Bieber Dictionary of Legal Abbreviations, available on the Reference shelves at the South Omaha Library, Call # 340.0148 P956 6th ed. This book will help you determine what the title of the Source Publication is based on the abbreviation in the citation.

A case can also be looked up in LexisNexis Academic by the citation but it will not give you the name of the Source Publication.

Law Codes (Statutes, Regulations)

Codes arrange all laws (e.g. statutes) or regulations by subject, and are cited by section (instead of page number). Section numbers are denoted by the § symbol.

34 CFR §300.300 =	20 USC §1400 =
Volume 34	Volume 20
<i>Code of Federal Regulations</i>	<i>United States Code</i>
Section 300.300	Section 1400

Example Legal Citations

Abbreviation	Example	Type	Source	Notes:
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U.S. Supreme Court

US	546 U.S. 189	U.S. Supreme Court opinions	<i>United States Reports</i> (government)	Each U.S. Supreme Court opinion will have three different, "parallel" citations (US, Sup. Ct., L Ed.,).
L Ed. L Ed. 2d.	168 L. Ed. 2d 508	U.S. Supreme Court opinions	<i>US Supreme Court Reports - Lawyer's Edition</i> (Lexis)	
Sup. Ct.	127 S. Ct. 2738	U.S. Supreme Court opinions	<i>Supreme Court Reports</i> (West)	

Other Federal Cases

F. F. 2d. F. 3d.	22 F. 354	U.S. Appellate Court opinions	<i>Federal Reporter</i> (2nd series) (3rd series)	
F. Supp. F. Supp. 2d. F. Supp. 3d.	246 F. Supp. 780	U.S. District Court opinions	<i>Federal Supplement</i> (2nd series) (3rd series)	

Nebraska Cases

N.W.. N.W.2d.	588 N.W.2d 575	Regional Case Reporter, all Appellate Courts	<i>North Western Reporter</i> (West)	Each NE. Supreme Court opinion may have two different, "parallel" citations. (N.W. & Neb.)
Neb.	256 Neb. 7	State supreme court opinions	<i>Nebraska Reports</i> (Government)	

Abbreviation	Example	Type	Source	Notes:
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Nebraska Cases (cont.)

Neb. App.	7 Neb. App. 499	Nebraska. Appellate Court opinions	<i>Nebraska Appellate Reports</i> (Government)	Each Neb. Court of Appeals opinions may have two "parallel" citations. (N.W.2d* & Neb. App..)
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*Nebraska's Court of Appeals was not formed until 1991 so the opinions would not have been published during the run of the first North Western Reporter.

Federal Statutes

USC	42 USC § 5106	Codified statutes	<i>United States Code</i> (government)	These three citations are interchangeable. e.g. 10 USC §34 = 10 USCA §34 = 10 USCS §34
USCA	42 USCA § 5106	Codified statutes (w/ Annotations)	<i>United States Code Annotated</i> (West)	
USCS	42 USCS § 5106	Codified statutes (w/ Annotations)	<i>United States Code Service</i> (Lexis)	
Stat.	49 Stat. 153	Statutes as written when passed into law	<i>United States Statutes at Large</i>	

Federal Regulations

FR	49 FR 10395	Proposed or final regulations	<i>Federal Register</i>	
CFR	8 CFR § 327.35	Codified regulations	<i>Code of Federal Regulations</i>	

Sources:

California State University, Stanislaus:

<http://library.csustan.edu/guides/subjects/legal/REF42.Legalcitations.pdf>

The Bluebook: a Uniform System of Citation (Columbia Law Review Ass'n et al. eds., 19th ed. 2010).

Helpful Websites:

Creighton Law Library Libguide for legal abbreviations: <http://lawguides.creighton.edu/LegAbbrev>

Creighton's law library has many libguides that have good links and are useful for research. Some of their links will require being on campus and/or using their computers but some do not. This one specifically lists a number of different common legal abbreviations. Use the tabs at the top of the page to switch between abbreviations for Federal Courts, Regional Reporters, State Courts and Reporters, Bluebook Abbreviations and other miscellaneous ones thrown under the category of Kitchen Sink.

A Research Guide to the Federal Register and the Code of Federal Regulations:

<http://www.llsdc.org/fed-reg-cfr/>

A lengthy, but well-written explanation to the Federal Register and CFRs including links to online resources.

Nebraska Briefs (Creighton Law Library): <http://dspace.creighton.edu/xmlui/handle/10504/8023>

A full-text collection of Nebraska Supreme Court and Court of Appeals briefs. A search can be done for a specific case or can be browsed by type of brief if looking for examples based on a certain type or by year.