



Thomas M. Cooley Law Libraries' Research Guide Series

LEGAL CITATIONS

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I. LEGAL CITATION

A legal citation, or cite for short, is a reference to a legal authority where particular information such as a case or statute can be found. A legal citation is most often made up of three parts: (1) a number identifying the VOLUME NUMBER, (2) an abbreviation for the TITLE, (3) and another number indicating a PAGE NUMBER. Here is an example:

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| 410 (Volume number) | U.S. (Title of set of books reporting the case.) | 113 (Page number case begins on.) |
|-------------------------------|--|--|

In this example, the Supreme Court's opinion *Chicago Mercantile Exchange v. Deaktor* will be found in volume **410** of the title ***United States Reports***, beginning on page **113**.

II. SUPREME COURT CITATION

Often, a case is reported or printed in more than one set of books and then all of the cites to that opinion are given; these are known as parallel citations. Here is an example of a parallel citation using the same case as above:

Chicago Mercantile Exchange v. Deaktor, 410 U.S. 113, 93 S.Ct. 705, 35 L.Ed. 2d 147 (1973).

In this example, the *United States Reports* citation, described earlier, is given first and is followed by the *Supreme Court Reporter* and the *United States Supreme Court Reports Lawyers' Edition* citations, commonly referred to as the *Lawyer's Edition*. The other citations are parallel citations.

Opinions of the U.S. Supreme Court as reported in three different reporters: the *United States Reports* (the official reporter); the *Supreme Court Reporter*, and the *Lawyers' Edition*. The text of the court's opinion will be the same in either one of the reporters. The only difference will be the editorial treatment made by the different publishers of these reporters.



III. MICHIGAN CITATION

Let's take a look at a Michigan state case:

People v. Phillips, 416 Mich. 63, 330 N.W.2d 366 (1982)

In the example above, the first citation (416 Mich. 63) is from Michigan's official state reporter, while the second citation (330 N.W.2d 366) is where the decision will be found in its applicable regional reporter. The regional reporters are published by West Publishing Co. and include West's topics and key numbers. The state of Michigan is located in West's Northwestern reporter which corresponds to the abbreviation N.W.2d found above.

IV. FREQUENTLY CITED REPORTERS

Below is a list of the most frequently cited reporters. If you have a cite, compare the abbreviation to this list to find the title of the reporter. You will come across many more abbreviations in the course of your research, but here is a start:

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| A., A2d, Atl., Atl.2d | <i>Atlantic Reporter (1st, 2nd series)</i> |
| F., F.2d, F.3d | <i>Federal Reporter (1st, 2nd, 3rd series)</i> |
| F.S., F.Supp., F.S.2d | <i>Federal Supplement (1st, 2nd)</i> |
| L.Ed., L.Ed.2d | <i>Lawyers' Edition (Supreme Court)</i> |
| Mich. | <i>Michigan Reports</i> |
| Mich. App. | <i>Michigan Court of Appeals Reports</i> |
| N.E., N.E.2d | <i>Northeastern Reporter (1st, 2nd)</i> |
| N.W., N.W.2d | <i>Northwestern Reporter (1st, 2nd)</i> |
| P., P.2d | <i>Pacific Reporter (1st, 2nd)</i> |
| S., S.2d | <i>Southern Reporter (1st, 2nd)</i> |
| S.C., S.Ct. | <i>Supreme Court Reporter</i> |
| S.E., S.E.2d | <i>Southeastern Reporter (1st, 2nd)</i> |
| S.W., S.W.2d | <i>Southwestern Reporter (1st, 2nd)</i> |
| U.S. | <i>United States Reports</i> |

V. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more information on citations or a list of additional abbreviations and their meanings, see the following titles:

| | |
|---|-----------------------|
| Bieber's Dictionary of Legal Abbreviations, | KF246.B46 2001 |
| Prince's Bieber Dictionary of Legal Citations, | KF246.B45 2006 |
| The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation, | KF245.B58 |

