The Law Student’s Quick Guide to Legal Citation

by

The Boston University School of Law Legal Information Librarians

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Introduction to Legal Citation

Legal citation is the method by which lawyers, law students, professors, and judges refer to the sources, whether primary or secondary,\(^1\) that they rely upon when drafting court documents or legal memoranda, law school assignments, law review articles, and judicial opinions.

Citations are shorthand notations that permit the identification and location of a particular source. Thus, elements of a citation generally include what the source is, where it can be found, the year it was created or went into effect, and for all primary sources and some secondary sources, the jurisdiction to which it applies. Because we rely on different sources for different reasons, legal citation also includes the use of signals, which introduce citations and explain to the reader the citation’s purpose, and explanatory parentheticals, which provide further details on a source’s relevance to the author's proposition.

Mastering legal citation takes practice, patience, and strict attention to detail. It means mastering the profession-wide standards for legal citation, which are set forth in The Bluebook: A Uniform System of

\(^1\) Primary sources include cases, statutes, and regulations. Secondary sources include hornbooks, monographs, legal encyclopedias, law review articles, and treatises.
At its inception, The Bluebook was a modest undertaking designed only to “deal with the more common abbreviations and [citation] forms to which one has occasion to refer.” Needless to say, The Bluebook is modest no longer. It has grown from a 26-page pamphlet first published in 1926 to a 511-page behemoth when the latest edition (the 19th) came out in 2010. This explosion in citation forms, rules, and complexity has made The Bluebook very difficult to use, particularly for new law students.

For that reason, we have created this Quick Guide, which, happily, is only slightly longer than the original A Uniform System of Citation published in 1926. Be forewarned; this Quick Guide is not comprehensive. It covers only (1) the difference

2 This guide and its authors are in no way affiliated with The Bluebook or any of the law reviews or journals that compile and edit it.

3 A Uniform System of Citation 1 (Harvard Law Review ed., 1926).

4 See id.

5 See The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation (Columbia Law Review Ass’n et al. eds., 19th ed. 2010) (“Bluebook”).

6 By design.
between citation forms in law review footnotes and those in legal memoranda and court documents, (2) abbreviations, (3) the use of signals and parentheticals, (4) basic citation forms for cases, statutes, and secondary sources, (5) short citation forms, and (6) how to cite cases, statutes, and secondary sources when you find them online rather than in print.7

We’ve limited the Quick Guide’s scope to avoid overwhelming the new student with a massive and confusing array of citation forms, abbreviations, and other rules that are seldom, if ever, used during the first year. Rather, we focus only on the areas (when it comes to legal citation) that we believe are most valuable to new law students.

Yes, The Bluebook is daunting, but it need not be your bane.8 Nor, of course, should it be your master. However, it can be your friend if certain steps are followed and a certain proficiency is achieved.9 We hope this Quick Guide helps. Good luck!

*   *   *

7 For everything else, you must, of course, consult The Bluebook itself.

8 Bane. n. "a source of harm or ruin." WEBSTER'S SEVENTH NEW COLLEGiate DICTIONARY 68 (1963)

9 This tidy bit of philosophy is based on something that Pliny the Elder likely said. Or, if not, probably should have.
Using The Bluebook

First off, don't think too much about The Bluebook. It's far too painful. Nevertheless, it is important to understand The Bluebook's purpose and its structure. Once you get those two things down, using The Bluebook becomes much easier.

As to The Bluebook's purpose, or more generally, as to the purpose of uniform legal citation, it is twofold: (1) the identification of a source, and (2) where to find it. Judge Richard Posner, even though a harsh critic of The Bluebook, agrees:

A system of citation forms has basically two functions: to provide enough information about a reference to give the reader a general idea of its significance and whether it’s worth looking up, and to enable the reader to find the reference if he decides that he does want to look it up.10

This purpose is quite vital in both legal practice and scholarship.

How does knowledge of The Bluebook's purpose help us use it? Well, if the purpose is to help us identify sources and then locate them, it's obvious that citation format, at least at its most basic level, must be standard and uniform. So, for example, every

published United States case, whether state or federal, has the following format:

[case name], [volume number] [reporter in which case is published in print] [page number on which case begins] ([court that decided case]$^{11}$ [year case was decided]).

Actual examples using this structure are below:$^{12}$


Due to uniform legal citation, we instantly recognize these examples as cases and we also immediately know, more specifically, where the case is published in print, the court that decided the case, and when the case was decided. This is very valuable information, and with uniformity, we get it at a glance.

The same principles apply to most other citation formats as well. The idea is that even if the specifics

$^{11}$ For cases where the citation to the reporter clearly identifies the court (for example, Flood v. Kuhn, 407 U.S. 258 (1972)), there is no need to identify the deciding court in the parenthetical.

$^{12}$ All citations in this Quick Guide are displayed using Courier font to show proper spacing.
of a citation are different, the uniformity in format permits easy recognition of the type of source used, where to find it, and information about it.

As to The Bluebook’s structure, well, it pays to know where things are. The Bluebook is divided into four main parts. **First** are the so-called “blue pages,” which provide typeface and citation format for court documents and legal memoranda (that is, for non-academic, non-law review related purposes). **Second** are the “white pages,” which provide typeface and citation format for law review footnotes (that is, for academic purposes). Generally, the difference in citation format as between court documents and legal memoranda and law review footnotes (as shown in the “blue” and “white” pages, respectively) is typeface only. Citation structure as between the two is generally the same. The **third** part of The Bluebook is the domestic and foreign jurisdiction pages at Tables T1 and T2. These pages provide essential information as to citation preference and court and statutory abbreviations for specific jurisdictions. Finally, **fourth** are the general abbreviation pages, which begin at Table T6.13

The Bluebook also has an index, and a good one. Use it. For example, if you are wondering about the correct usage of the signal “see”, just look up “see” in the index. Or, if you want to know how to (or even if you should) cite to a case’s subsequent history, again just look up “subsequent history.” You’ll be quickly directed to the right place.

13 For more on abbreviations, see below at page 12.
Finally, much tedium can be avoided by simply looking at the inside front or back covers of *The Bluebook*, which contain quick reference guides for most common citation forms and can provide answers to many basic citation questions without very much effort at all.

* * *
Law Review Footnotes v. Court Documents and Legal Memoranda

As mentioned above, there are differences in typeface conventions as between court documents and legal memoranda (non-academic citation) and law review footnotes (academic citation). These differences can generally be described as Blue Pages v. White Pages because it’s the Blue Pages at the beginning of The Bluebook that contain the formats for citations used in court documents and legal memoranda, and it’s the White Pages that come next that contain the formats for citations appearing in law review footnotes.

The key distinction between citing according to the Blue Pages and the White Pages is TYPEFACE. By that I mean usage of *italics*, **underlining**, **large and small** **CAPITALS**, and regular roman type. The typeface distinction is generally the only difference between the two formats. So, you can use the White Pages to guide you when citing in court documents and legal memoranda so long as you use the correct typeface.

Here are three examples, showing the forms for both academic and non-academic citation.\(^{14}\)

\(^{14}\) Please note: Even though *The Bluebook* permits the use of italics *instead of* underlining in court documents and legal memoranda where appropriate (see Rule B1, at 3), we don’t recommend italicization in non-academic citation for three reasons: (1) judges are likely accustomed to seeing underlining in court documents as
Case Names. In law review footnotes, case names are in regular roman type when used in a citation and italicized when the case name is an actual grammatical part of a sentence.\textsuperscript{15}

Here's what we mean by using a case name as a grammatical part of a sentence.

In \textit{Pennoyer v. Neff}, the Supreme Court outlined a power theory of personal jurisdiction.

Here's what we mean by using a case name in a citation.

The Supreme Court has often discussed the territorial limits placed on a court's jurisdiction. \textit{See, e.g.}, Pennoyer \textit{v. Neff}, 95 U.S. 714 (1878).

In the actual text of the law review article the case name is always italicized.\textsuperscript{16} By contrast, in court that has been the long-time standard (the choice of italics is new); (2) it is our belief that students would find a failure to distinguish between the two formats confusing in the learning process; and perhaps most importantly, (3) every relevant example given in the Blue Pages for non-academic citation is underlined; none are italicized. And, as we consider examples to be a vital part of using \textit{The Bluebook}, we'll use underlining for our Blue Pages, non-academic examples as well.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{See BLUEBOOK, supra} note 5, at 63-4.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{See id.} at 64.
documents or legal memoranda, case names are underlined,\textsuperscript{17} whether in the text or a footnote.\textsuperscript{18} Below are examples.

In text of law review article or as grammatical part of sentence in law review footnote.

\textit{Pennoyer v. Neff}

In law review footnote as citation.

\textit{Pennoyer v. Neff, 95 U.S. 714 (1878).}

In a court document or legal memorandum.

\textit{Pennoyer v. Neff, 95 U.S. 714 (1878).}

Books. In law review footnotes, books are placed in large and small capital letters.\textsuperscript{19} In court documents and legal memoranda, the title of the book is underlined and other aspects of the citation are in regular roman type.\textsuperscript{20} Below are examples.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Although italicization is permitted, we don't recommend it. See supra note 15.
\item \textsuperscript{18} See BLUEBOOK, supra note 5, at 4.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Id. at 63.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Id. at 23.
\end{itemize}
In law review footnote.


In court document or legal memorandum.


Court Rules. Court rules are cited using large and small caps in law review footnotes and regular roman type in court documents and legal memoranda. In all three examples above, please notice that the structure of the citation (elements of the citation, abbreviations, spacing, etc.) remains the same whether in a law review footnote or court document and legal memorandum. The only difference is the typeface.

* * *

---

21 Id. at 17, 121.
Abbreviations

_The Bluebook_ is huge into abbreviations. Every court has an abbreviation, every reporter has an abbreviation, every law review has an abbreviation, and many ordinary words are also abbreviated in case names and the like pursuant to _The Bluebook_’s voluminous abbreviation tables (the abbreviation tables are the blue edged pages that essentially comprise the second half of _The Bluebook_).

Here's how the abbreviation rules and tables are structured.

The general rules for structuring abbreviations are contained in **Rule 6**. Specific abbreviations are compiled as follows:

- Table T1 contains abbreviations for **federal and state courts and reporters**, divided up by jurisdiction.

- Table T6 contains words that are always abbreviated in **case names in citations**.

- Table T7 provides general abbreviations for various **courts** (not jurisdiction specific - for that see Table T1).

- Table T8 contains abbreviations for **explanatory phrases used in a case's prior and subsequent history**.
Table T9 provides abbreviations for **legislative documents**.

Table T10 provides abbreviations for **geographical terms**.

Table T11 provides abbreviations for the **titles of judges and other officials**.

Table T12 provides abbreviations for the **months of the year**.

Table T13 provides abbreviations for **journals and other periodicals**.

**Spacing.** Spaces are key components in abbreviations. The general rule is this: when stringing abbreviations together, always surround multiple letter abbreviations with spaces (spaces are shown by the dot). So:

\[
\begin{align*}
F.\cdot Supp.\cdot 2d \\
Mich.\cdot Ct.\cdot App. \\
S.\cdot Ct. 
\end{align*}
\]

In contrast, a string of single letter abbreviations contains no spaces. So:

\[
\begin{align*}
S.D.N.Y \\
F.3d
\end{align*}
\]

---

22 For more on spacing, see *Bluebook* Rule 6.1(a).
And finally, a combination of the two looks like this:

E.D. • Pa.
N.D. • Cal.

*     *     *
Signals and Parentheticals

Signals

Signals introduce legal citations whether in text or footnotes. They explain the manner in which the citation supports the proposition. If [no signal] is used, that means that the proposition in the cited authority and the author's proposition are the same. So, [no signal] is always used when quoting from a source and also when the proposition noted in the source and the proposition made by the author are identical.

The most common signals are listed below and each is discussed separately. Each discussion also contains an example of the typeface used for each signal when used in law review footnotes and when used in court documents and legal memoranda.

Please note that the first letter of a signal is only capitalized when the signal begins a citation sentence.

*   *   *

E.g.,

When you use e.g., to introduce a citation, you are saying that there are multiple sources that state the

23 For more information on signals, see Bluebook Rule 1.2.
same proposition as the one you are making in your paper, but citing to all of them would be superfluous (so you only cite to one and introduce it with e.g.,).

E.g., typeface examples can be found below.

Law Review Footnotes

E.g.,

Court Documents and Legal Memoranda

E.g.,

Please note that when using this signal, the final comma is neither italicized in a law review footnote nor underlined in a court document or legal memorandum.

* * *

See

When you use see, you are stating that the cited authority "clearly supports" your proposition. According to The Bluebook, see is used rather than [no signal] when your proposition is not identical to that stated by the cited authority, but, nevertheless, follows obviously from it.²⁵

²⁴ BLUEBOOK, supra note 5, at 54.

²⁵ See id.
Typeface examples are below.

Law Review Footnotes

See

Court Documents and Legal Memoranda

See

Please note: there is no comma between see and the citation.

In addition to using see as an introductory signal, it may also be used in a citation as a verb. In that case, see is neither underlined nor italicized. An example is below.

For additional discussion of Pliny the Elder’s philosophy, see supra note 9 and accompanying text.

* * * *

See also

When you use see also, you are stating that the authority you are citing is additional authority in support of your proposition, and that you have already "cited or discussed" authority that states or directly supports the proposition.26 You should use an explanatory parenthetical27 with see also.

26 Id.

[17]
The typefaces for see also are the same as those for see.

*   *   *

See, e.g.,

See, e.g., is an awesome little invention. As a combination of e.g., and see, it is used when many authorities support, but do not directly state, your proposition, and when citation to all of them would not be helpful.

Typeface examples are below.

**Law Review Footnotes**


**Court Documents and Legal Memoranda**


Please note: the second period in see, e.g., is italicized in a law review footnote and underlined in court documents and legal memoranda. The second comma, however, is not.

---

27 For more on explanatory parentheticals, see below at page 22.
Accord

When you use accord, you are stating that you are citing to two or more sources that "state or clearly support" your proposition, but your "text quotes or refers to only one."\textsuperscript{28} In that case, the source referred to in your text is introduced with [no signal] or see, and immediately thereafter, the additional sources are introduced with accord.

See below for an example using the different typefaces.

\textbf{Law Review Footnotes}


\textbf{Court Documents and Legal Memoranda}


\textsuperscript{28} Id. 

[19]
Cf.

Cf. is the abbreviation for compare. When you use cf. to introduce a citation, you are stating that the authority you are citing supports a proposition different than yours, but which is nevertheless "sufficiently analogous to lend support."29 You should include an explanatory parenthetical when using cf.

The typeface is the same as that for see, but make sure to underline the period in court documents and legal memoranda and italicize it in law review footnotes!

*   *   *

Contra

Use contra when the source "directly states the contrary of the proposition" you are making.30 The typeface conventions for contra are exactly like those for see.

*   *   *

__________________________________________
29   Id. at 55.
30   Id. (emphasis added).

[20]
But see

Who doesn't love but see? Use but see when the source you are citing "clearly supports a proposition contrary" to yours. The typeface conventions for but see are exactly like those for see.

* * *

See generally

Use see generally when the source cited provides helpful background information related to your proposition. An explanatory parenthetical when using see generally is often helpful. The typeface conventions for see generally are exactly like those for see.

* * *

A Final Note on Signals

When stringing together citations that are introduced by different signals, please remember two important things: (1) Insert semicolons between citations that are introduced by the same type of signal (that is, signals that support a proposition are of one type, and signals that contradict a proposition are of another type). Citations that are introduced

31 Id. (emphasis added).

32 Id.
by signals of a different type are separated by periods. (2) When a signal follows a semicolon, it is not capitalized. When the signal follows a period, it is capitalized. An example is below (with the signals bolded for clarity).


* * *

**Parentheticals**

*Parentheticals* are explanatory comments that follow a citation and explain in detail why you are citing the resource in question. Usage of an explanatory parenthetical depends on the introductory signal used.

There is no need to supply a *parenthetical* when you are using [no signal], *e.g.*, or *contra* because the relevance of the citation is readily apparent from the signal alone (look above in the discussions of the specific signals to see why this is so). Usage of other signals, however, may require a bit more explanation. In this vein, you should consider supplying a parenthetical when introducing citations with *accord; see; see, e.g.,*; and *but see*, as the relevance of your citation may not be readily apparent, and *The Bluebook* practically requires the use of parentheticals when using the signals *see*
also, cf., and see generally, because in those situations, the relevance of the specific citation is likely not apparent from the signal alone.

Parenthetical explanations generally begin with a present participle (the “ing” form of a verb) like “discussing,” “arguing,” “holding,” “explaining,” etc. Examples are below.

The Supreme Court has long deferred to Congress on matters pertaining to major league baseball. See, e.g., Flood v. Kuhn, 407 U.S. 258 (1972) (holding that change in baseball’s antitrust exemption must come from Congress, not the courts).

Because of the danger they present to livestock, Massachusetts should require that all pet pot-bellied pigs be properly licensed. Cf. Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 140, § 137 (2010) (implying that purpose of dog licensing requirement is to control dog and restrain it from “killing, chasing, or harassing livestock”).

For additional information on explanatory parentheticals, see Bluebook Rule 1.5.

* * *

[23]
Citing Cases

Generally

Cases that are published in print reporters are always cited in the same way, whether you find them in the actual book or online (that is, cases are always cited as if you found them in print). The elements of the citation are below. The commas are in the correct places.

[case name], [volume number] [abbreviated name of print reporter] [page number on which the case begins], [pincite] [(court that decided the case and year of decision)].

* * *

Reporters

A reporter is simply a set of books in which cases from a particular jurisdiction or collection of jurisdictions are published in print. Cases are always identified by volume number of the reporter in which they appear, the reporter’s abbreviation, and the page number on which the case begins. So, by way of example, 17 F.3d 660 refers to the case that begins on page 660 of volume 17 of the Federal Reporter 3d Series\(^{33}\) (which collects cases from the federal circuit courts of appeals).

---

\(^{33}\) A "series" is a complete set of volumes of a reporter, covering a set time period. There are three "series" of the Federal Reporter. The first numbered 300
Federal reporters and their abbreviations are shown below, with regional reporters (which collect state cases) on the page following.

**Federal Reporters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporter</th>
<th>Years Covered</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>District Court</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Supplement 2d</td>
<td>1998-date</td>
<td>F. Supp. 2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Rules Decisions</td>
<td>1938-date</td>
<td>F.R.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West's Bankruptcy Reporter</td>
<td>1979-date</td>
<td>B.R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Circuit Court</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Reporter</td>
<td>1891-1924</td>
<td>F.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Reporter 2d</td>
<td>1924-1993</td>
<td>F.2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Reporter 3d</td>
<td>1993-date</td>
<td>F.3d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Appendix (unpub cases)</td>
<td>2001-date</td>
<td>F. App'x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supreme Court</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Reports (official reporter)</td>
<td>1790-date</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Court Reporter (unofficial; published by West)</td>
<td>1882-date</td>
<td>S. Ct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer's Edition (unofficial; published by Lexis)</td>
<td>1790-date</td>
<td>L. Ed., L. Ed. 2d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

volumes; the second 999 volumes; and the third is currently up to 670 volumes.
# Regional (State) Reporters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporter</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>States Covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>A., A.2d</td>
<td>CT, DC, DE, MD, ME, NH, NJ, PA, RI, VT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Eastern</td>
<td>N.E., N.E.2d</td>
<td>IL, IN, MA, NY, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Western</td>
<td>N.W., N.W.2d</td>
<td>IA, MI, MN, ND, NE, SD, WI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>P., P.2d, P.3d</td>
<td>AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, KS, MT, NM, NV, OK, OR, UT, WA, WY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>So., So.2d</td>
<td>AL, FL, LA, MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Eastern</td>
<td>S.E., S.E.2d</td>
<td>GA, NC, SC, VA, WV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Western</td>
<td>S.W., S.W.2d</td>
<td>AR, KY, MO, TN, TX</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Name

In court documents and legal memoranda, case names are underlined. The examples below are for case names in citations in law review footnotes. The dot shows where a space should be inserted. Please note how "FDIC" is abbreviated pursuant to Rule 6.34

Bateman•v.•FDIC, [citation].

For the state case below, please note how the words "Markets" and "Federal" and "Incorporated" are abbreviated pursuant to Table T6.

Acme•Mkts.,•Inc.•v.•Fed.•Armored• Express,•Inc.,•[citation].

* * * *

Case Citation Information

Immediately following the case name comes the case citation information. Abbreviations are important here too; particularly for the relevant reporter and court. For federal court abbreviations and citation formats, see the beginning of Table T1 (United States Jurisdictions). The citation below is

34 Abbreviations in Case Names. (1) For case names in citations, abbreviate any word listed in Table T6 and geographical units listed in Table T10, unless the geographical unit is a party; (2) When using case names in textual sentences, only abbreviate well known acronyms, such as CIA, FBI, etc. and the following eight words: &, Ass'n, Bros., Co., Corp., Inc., Ltd., and No. [27]
from a United States district court case from the District of Massachusetts. Please take note of the spacing.

112•F. • Supp. • 2d • 89 • (D. • Mass. • 2000)

Key to Citation

112 = Volume Number
F. Supp. 2d = Reporter in which the case is published in print
89 = Page on which the case begins
D. Mass. = Court that decided the case
2000 = Year the case was decided

For state court abbreviations and citation formats, see Table T1 (states are listed alphabetically). With state cases, citation to the regional reporter only is generally preferred (no parallel cites). The citation

Parallel Citations. A parallel citation contains citations to both where a case appears in the West regional reporter and where it appears in the official state reporter. Parallel citations only apply with regard to documents submitted to a state court and only then when dictated by local rule, which will identify the official state reporter(s) to which citation must be made. The parallel citation is structured by citing to the official state reporter first and then to the regional reporter. Pincites are given for both reporters if appropriate. An example is below.

below is from the intermediate appellate court in Pennsylvania (see Table T1 for the court's abbreviation). The elements of the citation are the same as those of a federal case.

648•A.2d•1218•(Pa. •Super. •Ct. •1994).

* * *

Unpublished Cases

With the exception of federal appellate cases that appear in the Federal Appendix, unpublished cases are those cases that do not appear in a print reporter. These cases are generally cited as they appear in Westlaw and LexisNexis. Please see the examples below.

Westlaw Example.

Gonzales-Doldan•v. •ABPS, •No. •97-CV-0902E, •1998•WL•328642, •at •*1 •(W.D.N.Y. •June •16, •1998).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key to Citation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. 97-CV-0902E = Docket Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998 WL 328642 = Westlaw Identifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*1 = Pin Cite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.D.N.Y. = Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 16, 1998 = Date of Decision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note that the actual date that the case was decided, and not just the year, is used with
unpublished cases. Please also note that in unpublished cases, page numbers are always accompanied by an asterisk [*]. This is called "star-paging."

LexisNexis Example.


Key to Citation

No. 19596 = Docket Number
2002 Del. Ch. LEXIS 124 = LexisNexis Identifier
*16 = Pin Cite
Del. Ch. = Court
Oct. 23, 2002 = Date of Decision

For more information on unpublished cases, see Bluebook Rule 10.8.1.

Final Note: For cases where the citation to the reporter clearly identifies the court (for example, Flood v. Kuhn, 407 U.S. 258 (1972)), there is no need to identify the deciding court in the parenthetical.

* * *
Citing Statutes

Generally

Citing statutes can be difficult as the formats differ between federal and state, and from state to state.

Generally, though, when citing to a specific code section, you need

- the title, chapter, or subject area\(^{36}\) and
- the statutory compilation in which the section is found and
- the section number itself and
- the year of the code.

Session laws, by contrast, must include

- the name of the legislation and
- the law's chapter #, public law #, or other # and
- the particular bound volume in which the session law appears (like, e.g., \textit{Statutes at Large}).

You must always check \textit{Bluebook} Table T1 to find the correct citation format when citing to a particular jurisdiction’s statutes.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{36} This is dependent on jurisdiction. Some jurisdictions use a title or chapter number to denote a subject area for a statute. Others just spell out the subject area in full.}
For more information on citing to statutes, see Bluebook Rule 12.

* * *

Year of the Code

The proper year to use when citing to a code section presents a puzzling pickle for many law students. Here are some pointers to make it easier.

The correct year to use is the year of publication of the last official print version of the code you are citing, provided that your code section has not been amended or enacted since that last official version was published.\(^{37}\) For the U.S.C., the last official year is 2006 (the 2012 edition is likely a year or so away).

To find the correct year, look at the following, in this order of preference: (1) the spine of the book, (2) the title page, and (3) the copyright page.

If your code section has been amended or enacted since the last official version, you must look in a supplement or pocket part, and then use the year on

\(^{37}\) There is an exception to this in Bluebook rule 12.5, which permits citation to codes found in online databases without reference to the year of the code found in print. This exception has very little impact on law students, however, because in law school, use of the year of the code as found in print is still almost always preferred to that found online.

[32]
the title page or copyright page of the supplement or pocket part.

**Blue Pages**, non-academic citation examples of citing to the supplement or pocket part are shown below. The first citation is to the supplement only. The second is to both the supplement and the main volume.


Mass.•Gen.•Laws•ch.•5,•§•1•(2010•&•Supp.•2011).

* * *

**Federal Statutes**

**Statutory Codes.** For federal code sections, **always** cite to the United States Code (U.S.C.) if your statute is contained therein. If not, cite to the U.S.C.A. or the U.S.C.S. in that order of preference. Below are examples of how to cite to a federal code section.

**When citing to an entire statute.**

Securities•Act•of•1933,•15•U.S.C.•§§•77a–77aa•(2006).

**When citing to an individual code section.**

Session Laws. When citing to a session law, always include the following information: Name of Legislation (omit "The" as first word of name), public law or chapter number, Statutes at Large citation, and year of legislation if not already apparent from statute's name. Examples are below.


* * *

State Statutes

Statutory Codes. State code citation format is always jurisdiction-specific. You must check the relevant state's section in Table T1 in order to cite correctly. Examples are below.

Massachusetts

Law Review Footnotes

MASS. GEN. LAWS ch. x, §x (<year>).

Court Documents


[34]
New York

Law Review Footnotes

N.Y. Banking Law § x (McKinney <year>).

Court Documents

N.Y. Banking Law § x (McKinney <year>).

Session Laws. Like state codified laws, proper citation to state session laws is jurisdiction-specific (although all session law citations share some common elements). Please make sure to check Table T1. An example from Massachusetts is below.


Please note that although the proper citation format varies from state to state, every citation to a state session law must contain the name of the legislation (the "Act of ..." construction is used when there is no popular name), a ch.# or other #, and then the appropriate cite to the proper bound volume where the session laws are initially published.

* * *

[35]
Citing Secondary Sources

A secondary source is simply a source that is *about* the law rather than the law itself. Secondary sources come in many different varieties, from dictionaries and single volume monographs to journal articles, legal encyclopedias and practice guides. The various types of secondary sources have somewhat different citation formats, and the most common types and formats are discussed below.

* * *

Dictionaries

Everyone knows dictionaries are awesome. Cite them according to the examples below, noting again the difference in formats between law review footnotes and court documents and legal memoranda.

**Law Review Footnotes**

Black’s Law Dictionary 65 (9th ed. 2009).


**Court Documents**

Black’s Law Dictionary 65 (9th ed. 2009).


[36]
Legal Encyclopedias

Everyone loves a good legal encyclopedia. Cite them according to the examples below.

Law Review Footnotes

1•AM. •JUR. •2D•Accession •& •Confusion •§
15•(2005).

35A•C.J.S. •Federal •Civil •Procedure •§
318•(2003).

Court Documents

1•Am. •Jur. •2d•Accession •& •Confusion •§
15•(2005).

35A•C.J.S. •Federal •Civil •Procedure •§
318•(2003).

* * *
Journals and Periodicals

Consecutively Paginated. Cite consecutively paginated\(^{38}\) journal articles with reference to the example below. The key is to use the correct abbreviation for whatever journal you are citing. You can find the abbreviations for just about any law journal you can imagine in *The Bluebook* at Table T13.


Please note: The above citation is proper for law review footnotes. The title of the article is italicized and the abbreviated name of the journal is in **LARGE AND SMALL CAPS**. When appearing in court documents or legal memoranda, by contrast, the title of the article is underlined and the abbreviation of the journal is written in ordinary roman type.

Non-Consecutively Paginated. Cite journals and periodicals that are separately paginated within each issue according to the examples below.


\(^{38}\) These are journals that are consecutively paginated throughout an entire volume, with each issue’s beginning page number starting where the previous issue left off.
Newspapers are generally cited the same way as non-consecutively paginated journals.


As always with periodicals, change italics to underlining and large and small caps to regular roman type when citing in court documents and legal memoranda.

* * *

Massachusetts Practice

Massachusetts Practice is tricky. Cite it according to Bluebook rule 15.8. An example, showing the proper citation format for both law review footnotes and court documents is below.

Law Review Footnotes


Court Documents

Please note: You can find the subject area ("Consumer Law") on the front or spine of the volume. The year of publication is on the copyright page.

* * *

Multi-Volume Treatises

Cite multi-volume treatises in law review footnotes like the example below.


Below is a more complex citation that refers to a shorter work published in a multi-volume treatise.


There’s a lot going on in this citation, so we’ve omitted the space indicators to make it easier to read. First, as noted above, this is not just a citation to a multi-volume treatise. Rather, it’s a cite to a shorter, independently authored, work that is contained within a multi-volume treatise. The shorter work is cited as it was an article, and the multi-volume treatise is as if it was a book, with the “1” before the treatise title being the relevant volume number.

[40]
Single Volume Treatises and Monographs

In law review footnotes, cite books and other single volume treatises or monographs like the example below. For non-academic purposes, change everything to regular roman type except the book's title, which is underlined.


* * *

[41]
Short Citation Forms

A short citation form is a shorthand method for referring to a citation that has already been cited in full.

The most common short form is id. Id. is used to cite to the "immediately preceding authority," but only when the immediately preceding citation or footnote contains only one authority. 39

Other short forms are simply shorter versions of the full citation. The general rule is that use of a short form is appropriate in academic citation if the short form clearly identifies the resource cited to and the resource is already cited (in either full or short form) in the same footnote or one of the preceding five footnotes. 40 For non-academic purposes, use of the short form is appropriate when it clearly identifies the resource cited to, the full citation form appears in the same general discussion, and the reader will not have trouble locating the full cite. 41

For examples of appropriate short forms for cases and statutes, see Bluebook Rules 10.9 (cases) and 12.10 (statutes). For examples of appropriate short

39 BLUEBOOK, supra note 5, at 72.

40 See, e.g., id. at 72.

41 See, e.g., id. at 13.
forms for other types of resources, see *Bluebook* Rule 4.2.

* * *
Citing to Cases, Statutes, and Secondary Sources that You Find on Westlaw and LexisNexis

The general rule when citing to materials that you find on Westlaw or LexisNexis is this: if the resource is published in print, *always* cite to it *as if you found it in print*. This does not present a problem for cases, because the authoritative citation to the print version is always supplied when you view the case online.

Not so, unfortunately, with statutes and non-periodical secondary sources. With statutes and non-periodical secondary sources, the online databases do not supply the authoritative *year of the code* for statutes or the authoritative *year of publication* for non-periodical secondary sources, both of which are required for proper citation.

*The solution?* Even if you have used the online version of a statute or non-periodical secondary source, to cite it properly, you *must* go to the print version and find the proper year of the code or year of publication.

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42 Non-periodical secondary sources include treatises, practice guides, hornbooks, legal encyclopedias, and dictionaries. As for periodicals like journals, magazines, and newspapers, you should be able to find the proper year of publication online.

43 **Note:** For non-periodical secondary sources, the year of publication is generally on the copyright page. For
Conclusion

This *Quick Guide* is short, on purpose. To go into much more detail, we believe, would result in a *Bluebook* clone and defeat the essential purpose of this project, which is to provide simple answers to the basic citation questions faced by new law students. To this end, and without rehashing specific citation rules, the key points to remember are these:

- Are your citations for use in law review footnotes (that is, for academic purposes) or in court documents or legal memoranda (that is, for non-academic purposes)? Know which one and cite accordingly.

- To use the proper signal, make sure you know why you are citing to a particular source.

- Be aware that *The Bluebook* will almost always supply you with the proper abbreviation, whether it’s for a case name, the name of a court, the name of a reporter, the name of a journal, etc.

- When citing to a particular source, try to find an example in *The Bluebook* to copy from; it’s easier than trying to read and apply a rule.

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a discussion on finding the proper year of the code, see page 31 above.
• Always ask questions if you need help. Good Luck!

* * *
Additional Reading

Not everyone loves the Bluebook like we do. Below find some friendly and not-so-friendly critiques.

• Warren D. Rees, *Singing the Bluebook Blues*, 1 AALL SPECTRUM 20 (June 1997).
• Arnold B. Kanter, *Putting Your Best Footnote Forward*, BARRISTER (Spring 1982) at 42.

And the editors of the Bluebook have responded.