The Bluebook: Uniform Citation for Legal Reference

The Bluebook style guide was established in 1926 and is compiled by the editors of the Columbia Law Review, the Harvard Law Review, the University of Pennsylvania Law Review, and The Yale Law Journal (2010). To learn more about this citation, please click here.

When to cite legal sources

When you rely on and use legal sources and legal authorities in your own work, The Bluebook provides a systematic citation form to cite, or attribute, outside references.

Legal citation follows the discussion from the source: It is clear that only personal rights that can be deemed "fundamental" or "implicit in the concept of ordered liberty" are guaranteed personal privacy Palko v. Connecticut, 302 U.S. 319, 325 (1937).

How to cite legal sources

The order of the citation is important because each part identifies something in the reference that can lead the reader to the original source as you found it.

Each legal source has its own particular order to follow and specific information that must be included in the citation. Please consult The Bluebook for additional information.

How to cite cases

A general case citation is as follows: Tom Reed Gold Mines Co. v. United E. Mining Co., 39 Ariz. 533 (1932).

Always underline or italicize case names:
Smith Corp. v. Doe Inc.

The “v.” is lowercase, is followed by a period, and is not “vs.”:
Paradise v. Parker,

Follow case names by a comma, which is not underlined or italicized:
Arizona v. Fulminante,

According to The Bluebook’s website, generations of judges, lawyers, legal scholars, and paralegals have used this citation style for over 80 years!

In fact, you can take interactive tours of The Bluebook that showcase topics such as how to search and find citation guidance quickly, how to familiarize yourself with The Bluebook, and how to use authoritative tips from the Editors.

These video tutorials come in high-resolution and medium-resolution formats. To take these tours, please click here to find a list of videos and topics.

Figure 1. The Supreme Court of the United States of America.

Figure 2. Judge’s gavel and American flag.
How to Cite Cases?

Do not include parties' first names, unless they are the name of a corporation:

Baker v. John Smith Inc.,

If there is more than one plaintiff or defendant, use only the first party on each side.

Do not abbreviate United States in a case name:

United States v. Michigan,

Some words may be abbreviated, but do not abbreviate them if they are the first word of a party. Refer to the Bluebook for common abbreviations.

How to Cite Federal Cases?

**U.S. Supreme Court:** Cite to U.S. If it's not yet published there, cite to S. Ct., L. Ed., U.S.L.W., or LEXIS, in that order of preference. Do not include parallel cites:


**U.S. Circuit Courts of Appeal:** Cite to F., F.2d, or F.3d. Note no space between the F. and the number. Include the circuit in the cite:

Davis v. Everett, 102 F.2d 24 (9th Cir. 1954).

**U.S. District Courts:** Cite to F. Supp. Note the space between the F. and the Supp. Include the district in the cite:


How to Cite State Cases?

Cite to the regional reporter. Include the court in the citation:


How to Cite Cases Available Only in Lexis?

How to Cite Quotations?

Always give the exact page of a quote (i.e. pinpoint citation), even when paraphrasing:


How to Cite Statutes?


**State Statutes:** The form varies by state.


How to Cite Constitutions and Amendments?

**Federal:**

U.S. Const. amend. XX

U.S. Const. art. I, § 2, cl. 3

**State:**

Cal. Const. art. XIV

How to Cite Secondary Sources?

**Books:** John Knight, A Jury of Twelve, 225 (1st. ed. 2001).

**Periodicals:** Mary A. Jones, The Best of Trial Briefs, 28 Neb. L. Rev. 102 (2006).


How to Cite Court Rules?

Federal:


Fed. R. Crim. P. 7(b).

State:


How to Cite Electronic Sources?


Miscellaneous Tips and Tricks

When a cite is in the middle of a sentence, follow it with a comma.

In Yon v. Sambaed, 421 U.S. 119 (1992), the Supreme Court held that ...

When a cite is at the end of a sentence, follow it with a period.

This decision was overruled in Ankeny v. Burnside, 102 F.2d 65 (3d Cir. 1942).

When you have a string cite (several cases cited in a row) separate the cases with semicolons. Cite federal cases first, then state cases, and cite higher courts before lower ones.

To delete one or more words within a quote, use ellipses. At the end of a sentence, follow the ellipses by a period.

"The time has come … to talk of many things." Lewis Caroll, Alice in Wonderland 56 (1872).

Never start a sentence with ellipses. If you start a quote in the middle of a sentence, or if you substitute letters or words in a sentence, use brackets.


When one authority is quoting from another, indicate it.


For more information about legal citation, please see The Bluebook.