

# Understanding Legal Citations



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This handout is a summary of rules established by The Bluebook : A Uniform System of Citation (Information Desk KF 245 .B58). Because legal citations use a complex set of abbreviations that cannot be shown in a short handout, students will need to consult The Bluebook to learn how to cite a specific legal source. This guide covers basic principles and how to cite common sources.

## Court Cases

Court opinions are published in sets of books known as reporters. Reporters include all decisions in chronological order. Case citations use the case name, volume, reporter, page, and year:

Example: Reno v. Flores, 507 U.S. 318 (1993).

Reno v. Flores	Names of the parties in the case
507	Volume that contains the cited case
U.S.	Abbreviation for the reporter
318	Page number on which the case begins
1993	Year the court decision was published

Cases may have several parallel citations, i.e., the same case may be in 2-3 different reporters. You only need one parallel citation to find a case. If you do not have access to the exact reporter being cited, you can usually find the same case by using the index of a reporter that is available. Law databases such as LexisNexis and Westlaw also support searching by any parallel citation.

### UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT REPORTS

Reno v. Flores, 507 U.S. 318 (1993).

### UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT REPORTS, LAWYER'S EDITION

Reno v. Flores, 123 L.Ed.2d 1 (1993).

### SUPREME COURT REPORTER [Reference KF 101 .S8]

Reno v. Flores, 113 S.Ct. 1439 (1993).

### UNITED STATES TAX COURT REPORTS

Estate of Young v. C.I.R., 110 T.C. 297 (1998).

For lower courts, cite the parties, volume, reporter, edition, page number, court name, and year:

### FEDERAL REPORTER

Newby v. Enron Corp., 446 F.3d 558. (5<sup>th</sup> Circ. 2006).

### SOUTH WESTERN REPORTER [Reference KF 135 .S7]

#### TEXAS COURT OF APPEALS (Tex. App.)

Curry v. State, 228 S.W.3d 292 (Tex. App.—Waco 2007).

Villarreal v. State, 893 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. App. – Houston [1<sup>st</sup> Dist.] 1994).

#### TEXAS COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS (Tex. Crim. App.)

Mendez v. State, 138 S.W.3d 334 (Tex. Crim. App. 2004).

#### TEXAS SUPREME COURT (Tex.)

City of Dallas v. Jennings, 142 S.W.3d 310 (Tex. 2004).

## Statutes

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Laws are published by subject in books called codes. Most codes are published in two editions – the official edition published by the government and an annotated edition published by a private company. Annotated editions have notes about each statute with citations to cases and articles.

Statute citations have a volume, the name of the cited code, a section, and a date:

**Example:** 42 U.S.C. § 7706(a) (1994).

42	Volume that contains the statute
U.S.C.	Abbreviation for the code.
7706(a)	Section of the code being cited.
1994	Year the code volume was published.

### **UNITED STATES CODE**

42 U.S.C. § 7706(a) (1994).

### **UNITED STATES CODE ANNOTATED (WEST GROUP)**

42 U.S.C.A. § 7706(a) (West 2006).

### **TEXAS STATUTES**

Tex. Penal Code § 19.02 (1994).

Tex. Bus. & Com. § 9.109 (2001).

Tex. Rev. Civ. Stat. § 1446.01 (1997)

### **VERNON'S TEXAS CODES ANNOTATED (WEST GROUP)**

Tex. Penal Code Ann. § 19.02 (Vernon 2003).

Tex. Bus. & Com. Ann. § 9.109 (Vernon 2002).

Tex. Rev. Civ. Stat. Ann. § 1446.01 (Vernon 2003).

## Public Laws / Session Laws

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The original text of a law is called a public law or session law. Here are some common sources:

### **PUBLIC LAWS (U.S.)**

Act of Nov. 25, 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-296, 116 Stat. 2135.

### **UNITED STATES CODE CONGRESSIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE NEWS [Reference KF48.U5]**

Homeland Security Act of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-296, 2002 U.S.C.C.A.N. (116 Stat.) 2135.

### **VERNON'S TEXAS SESSION LAW SERVICE [Reference KFT 1225 .V4]**

Act of May 8, 2007, ch. 1, § 1, 2007 Tex. Sess. Law Serv. 5 (West).

## The Internet: Court Cases and Statutes

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Many court cases and statutes are now available on the Internet. If you only consult the Internet version, provide the traditional citation for the print source and the link for the Internet version:

Reno v. Flores, 507 U.S. 318 (1993), <http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/91-905.ZC.html>.

Tex. Penal Code § 19.02 (1994), <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/SOTWDocs/PE/htm/PE.19.62069.53391.htm#62071.53392>.

For more details, see Prince's Bieber Dictionary of Legal Citations (Info Desk KF246.P73).