

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. = <i>United States Reports</i> (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

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)	

California Cases

Cal. Cal 2d. (etc.)	39 Cal. 4th 970	California Supreme Court opinions	<i>California Reports</i> (government)	Each CA. Supreme Court opinion may have three different, "parallel" citations. (Cal., P., & Cal. Rptr.)
P. P. 2d.	140 P.3d 775	State supreme court opinions - western states (including CA)	<i>Pacific Reporter</i> (West)	
Cal. Rptr. Cal. Rptr. 2d. (etc.)	47 Cal. Rptr. 3d 467	California Supreme and Appellate Court opinions	<i>California Reporter</i> (West)	
Cal. App. Cal. App. 2d. Cal App. 3d. Call App. 4th.	39 Cal.App.4th 970	California. Appellate Court opinions	<i>California Appellate Reports</i> (government) (2 nd series, 3 rd series, etc.)	Each CA. Appeals Court opinion may have two "parallel" citations. (Cal. App. & Ca. Rptr.)



Abbreviation	Example	Type	Source	Notes:
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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>	

California Statutes

There are 29 different California code (individually listed on the next page)				
Educ. Code	Educ. Code §3423	Codified statutes	California Codes	Sources outside of California often add "CA" or "CAL" to the citation.
Cal Edu. Code.	CAL Edu. Code §3423	Codified statutes (w/ Annotations)	<i>Deering's California Codes</i>	

California Regulations

Cal. Reg. Notice Register	2003 Cal. Reg. Notice Register 685	Proposed regulations	<i>California Regulatory Notice Register</i>	
CCR	8 CCR § 327.35	Codified regulations	<i>California Code of Regulations</i>	

Secondary Sources

Cal. Jur.		California law by topic	<i>California Jurisprudence</i> (West)	
CJS		Federal law by topic	<i>Corpus Juris Secundum</i>	
(Journal) L. Rev.		Law review article	<i>Harvard Law Review</i>	Cites of law reviews usually include L. Rev.



Legal Citations to California Codes

California codes contain state law (statutes) in 29 separate series, each covering a general topic (e.g. - Education, Insurance, etc.). Some legal citations use the full name of the code, while others use abbreviations. For sources published outside of California, it is common to add "California" or "Cal" to the code or abbreviation, e.g. Cal Pen Code § 11164.

California Code Name	Common Abbrev.	LexisNexis Abbrev.
<i>Business and Professions</i>	Bus. & Prof. Code	Cal Bus & Prof Code
<i>Civil</i>	Civil Code	Cal Civ Code
<i>Code of Civil Procedure</i>	Civ. Proc. Code	Cal Code Civ Proc
<i>Commercial</i>	Com. Code	Cal U Com Code
<i>Corporations</i>	Corp. Code	Cal Corp Code
<i>Education</i>	Educ. Code	Cal Ed Code
<i>Elections</i>	Elec. Code	Cal Elec Code
<i>Evidence</i>	Evid. Code	Cal Evid Code
<i>Family</i>	Fam. Code	Cal Fam Code
<i>Financial</i>	Fin. Code	Cal Fin Code
<i>Fish and Game</i>	Fish & Game Code	Cal Fish & G Code
<i>Food and Agriculture</i>	Food & Agric. Code	Cal Food & Agr Code
<i>Government</i>	Gov't. Code	Cal Gov Code
<i>Harbors and Navigation</i>	Harb. & Nav. Code	Cal Harb & Nav Code
<i>Health and Safety</i>	Health & Safety Code	Cal Health & Saf Code
<i>Insurance</i>	Ins. Code	Cal Ins Code
<i>Labor</i>	Lab. Code	Cal Lab Code
<i>Military and Veterans</i>	Mil. & Vet. Code	Cal Mil & Vet Code
<i>Penal</i>	Penal Code	Cal Pen Code
<i>Probate</i>	Prob. Code	Cal Prob Code
<i>Public Contract</i>	Pub. Cont. Code	Cal Pub Contract Code
<i>Public Resources</i>	Pub. Res. Code	Cal Pub Resources Code
<i>Public Utilities</i>	Pub. Util. Code	Cal Pub Util Code
<i>Revenue and Taxation</i>	Rev. & Tax. Code	Cal Rev & Tax Code
<i>Streets and Highways</i>	Sts. & High. Code	Cal Sts & Hy Code
<i>Unemployment Insurance</i>	Unemp. Ins. Code.	Cal Unemp Ins Code
<i>Vehicle</i>	Veh. Code	Cal Veh Code
<i>Water</i>	Water Code	Cal Wat Code
<i>Welfare and Institutions</i>	Welf. & Inst. Code	Cal Wel & Inst Code

Getting the text: Several online resources, including the State of California website as well as *LexisNexis Academic* (a database available via the library website) include the full-text of each California Code.

