

Finding Federal and State Cases

University of Idaho
College of Law

Reporters

Court opinions, or cases, are published in books called reporters. Reporters are sets of books collecting cases in chronological order.

1. *Official and Unofficial Reporters*

- A. Reporters include official and unofficial versions.
- B. The text of the opinion in official and unofficial reporters is identical.
- C. Unofficial reporters include editorial additions to aid in research.
- D. Official versions must be used for citations in court documents.

2. *Jurisdiction Coverage*

- A. Some reporters limit opinions to a single jurisdiction or court.
- B. Some reporters collect cases from multiple jurisdictions.

3. *Examples*

- 1. Single jurisdiction: **Idaho Reports** publishes cases from the Court of Appeals and Supreme Court in Idaho *only*.
- 2. Multiple jurisdictions: the **Pacific Reporter** provides state cases from Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah, Washington & Wyoming.

Citation Format

The basic citation format for all reporters includes the names of the parties to the case followed by the volume number, abbreviated name of the reporter, page number of the reporter in which the opinion is published and the year of the decision. Jurisdiction information is added for the Federal Reporters and Federal Supplements.

Example: Citation for U.S. Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*
Citation: *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)

<u>Names of Parties</u>	<u>Volume</u>	<u>Reporter</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Date</u>
Brown v. Board of Education	347	U.S.	483	1954

Supreme Court Reporters

1. *Three reporters* each publish all United States Supreme Court decisions:
 - A. **United States Reports (U.S.)**
 - B. **Supreme Court Reporter (S.Ct.)**
 - C. **United States Supreme Court Reports Lawyers' Edition (L.Ed., L.Ed.2d)**
2. *Official Reporter*
 - A. United State Reports (U.S.) is the official reporter.
 - B. Six months to one year behind unofficial reporters in publication.
3. *Unofficial Reporters (S.Ct.) and (L.Ed.)*
 - A Use unofficial reporter if case not yet published in United States Reports.
 - B. **Star pagination:** page-break references to the page numbers for the same text in the official reporters allows citation to U.S. Reports.
 - C. Star pagination available on Lexis and Westlaw.
4. *Citation format* includes parties, volume, reporter, page and year.
5. *Example: see under Citation Format above.*
6. *Parallel citations*
 - A. References to the same text in different reporters.
 - B. Supreme court cases are often cited in all three reporters.
7. *Example:*

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483, 74 S.Ct. 686, 98 L.Ed. 873 (1954).

Federal Reporter: Federal Courts of Appeal

1. *Official Reporter*
 - A. **Federal Reporter (F., F.2d, F.3d)**
 1. "F" series covers volumes 1-300 published from 1880-1924.
 2. "F.2d" series covers volumes 1-999 published from 1924-1993.
 3. "F.3d" series began in Fall, 1993 to current.
 - B. There is only one reporter for the Federal Courts of Appeals.
 - C. Reporter is official though not published by the government.
2. *Jurisdiction Coverage*
 - A. Federal Courts of Appeals are immediately below the Supreme Court.
 - B. Thirteen courts comprise the courts of appeal---eleven regional circuits, the District of Columbia circuit and a federal circuit.
 - C. Approximately 60% of federal appellate decisions published.
3. *Citation format* includes parties, volume, reporter, page, circuit and date.
4. *Example:* Citation for *Larson v. Saddens* in the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals.

Larson v. Saddens, 808 F.2d 674 (5th Cir. 1986).

<u>Names of Parties</u>	<u>Volume</u>	<u>Reporter</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Date</u>
Larson v. Saddens	808	F.2d	674	5th Cir.	1986

Federal Supplement: Federal District Courts

1. *Official Reporter*

A. **Federal Supplement (F.Supp., F.Supp.2d).**

1. 1880-1932 federal district court cases published in the Federal Reporter.
2. **F.Supp.** covers volumes 1-999 published from 1932-1998.
3. **F.Supp. 2d** starts with volume 1 and is published from 1998 to current.

B. There is only one reporter for the Federal District Courts.

C. Reporter is official though not published by the government.

D. Only 5-10% of district court cases published.

2. *Jurisdiction Coverage*

A. District courts are federal trial courts.

B. Smaller or less populated states have a single district i.e. District of Kansas.

C. Larger and more populated states have more than one district.

Examples: Central District of California (C.D. Cal.) and Northern District of California (N.D. Cal.)

3. *Citation format* includes parties, volume, reporter, page, district and date.

4. *Example:* Citation for *Arson v. Quench* in the Federal District Court of Kansas.

Arson v. Quench, 808 F.Supp. 409 (D.Kan. 1976).

<u>Names of Parties</u>	<u>Volume</u>	<u>Reporter</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Date</u>
Arson v. Quench	808	F.Supp.	409	D.Kan.	1976

State Reporters

1. *Official and Unofficial*

A. Some states publish their cases in an official reporter.

B. Some states use the regional reporter in their jurisdiction as their official reporter.

C. Idaho's official reporter is the **Idaho Reports**.

2. *Jurisdiction Coverage:* covers state appellate cases. .

3. *Parallel Citations*

A. State cases may also be cited to the Regional Reporter in their jurisdiction.

B. Regional Reporter for Idaho is the Pacific Reporter (P., P.2d, P.3d)

4. *Example:* *Smith v. Lott*, 73 Idaho 205, 249 P.2d 803 (1952).

Regional Reporter System

Regional reporters collect decisions from loosely connected groups of states.

Some states have designated the regional reporter as their official reporter. The

table below lists the abbreviations of the regional reporters and the states covered in each set:

Abbreviation	Regional Reporter (States in Reporter)
P., P.2d, P.3d	Pacific (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, KS, MT, NV, NM, OK, OR, UT, WA, WY)
S.W., S.W.2d	South Western (AR, KY, MO, TN, TX)
A., A.2d	Atlantic (CT, DE, ME, MD, NH, NJ, PA, RI, VT)
N.Y., N.Y.2d	New York Supplement (NY)
S., S.2d	Southern (AL, FL, LA, MS)
N.W., N.W.2d	North Western (IA, MI, MN, NE, ND, SD, WI)
N.E., N.E.2d	North Eastern (IL, IN, MA, NY, OH)
S.E., S.E.2d	South Eastern (GA, NC, SC, VA, WV)

Finding Cases

Because cases are published chronologically in reporters, a finding aid is needed to find cases on certain subjects. Listed below are finding aids for print and electronic research.

1. *Print finding aids*

- A. Finding a reporter name when you have a citation
 1. Harvard **Bluebook**, *A Uniform System of Citation*
 2. Lists reporter citations for all state, appellate, and supreme courts.
- B. Finding cases on a subject
 1. Use **Descriptive Word Index** for digests (see list of digests below).
 2. Use **Words & Phrases** for digests (see list of digests below).
 2. Use **Key Number System**
Find Key Number on identified topic from any West publication.
- C. Finding citations when you have the names of the parties to a case.
 1. **Shepard's Acts and Cases by Popular Name**
 2. Use **Table of Cases** volume for the digests (see list of digests below).
- D. Digests
 1. **State and Regional Reporter digests**
Law Library has digests for Pacific Reporter, ID, WA and CA.
 2. **American Digest System**
 - A. Covers all reported decisions from state and federal courts.
 - B. Includes:
 1. Century Digest 1658-1896
 2. Decennial Digests 1896-present
 - a. separate series for each 10-year period to 1976.

- b. separate series for each 5 years from 1976.
- 3. General Digests update the most recent Decennial Digests.
- 3. **Federal Digests**
 - A. Covers all reported federal cases.
 - B. Includes:
 - 1. Federal Digest (1754 - 1938)
 - 2. Modern Federal Practice Digest (1939-1960)
 - 3. Federal Practice Digest 2d (1961-1975)
 - 4. Federal Practice Digest 3d (1976-1989)
 - 5. Federal Practice Digest 4th (1990-present)
- 4. **U.S. Supreme Court Reports Digest**
 - Covers U.S. Supreme Court cases *only*.
- 5. **Bankruptcy Digest** covers federal bankruptcy cases *only*.
- 2. **Electronic Searching**
 - A. Westlaw and Lexis (password only)
 - B. LexisNexis Academic (public access)
 - 1. Search by keyword, citation, party name.
 - 2. Narrow search by fields i.e. dates, Boolean operators, etc.

Websites

United States Supreme Court

www.supremecourtus.gov

The official Supreme Court website with decisions from the U.S. Reports from 1991, volume 502, to current.

PACER (Public Access to Court Electronic Records)

<http://www.pacer.gov/>

Fee-based Internet service for obtaining records for federal appellate, bankruptcy and district courts cases.

Findlaw

<http://www.findlaw.com/casecode/>

Full-text searchable database of U.S. Supreme Court decisions from 1893 to present, some federal courts of appeal and district court decisions from mid 90's and some state court decisions for all 50 states from mid 90's.

Idaho Supreme Court and Court of Appeals

<http://www.isc.idaho.gov>

Browse or search Idaho appellate cases from 2006.