

# LEGAL CITATIONS

## Legal Citations are Different.

- Legal citations are done in their own special format. It is different from all other bibliographic citation styles.
- This is because court cases are published in a different way than most other academic information. They are published in large series of books, usually called reporters.
- These series will only collect decisions and statutes from certain places.
  - For instance, the United States Reports only publishes the decisions of the Supreme Court.
  - That means if you find a citation for the United States Reports, you already know the case was decided by the Supreme Court.
- Legal citations will tell you the name of the case or statute, the book series and page you can find the case in, and the year the case was decided.

## How Do I Read Them?

- Here is an example of a legal citation:
 

*Roe v. Wade* 410 U.S. 113, 93 S.Ct. 705,  
35 L.Ed 2<sup>nd</sup> 147 (1973) – **Changed to 1973 as on the original doc**
- The easiest way to read it is to break it down into parts.
- Legal citations read like this: [the name of the case], [the volume number of the legal book series where it was published], [the abbreviation of the book series it was published in], [the page number the case is printed on], [the year the case was decided.]
- So, using the example, here's what you can tell:
  - *Roe v. Wade* is the name of the case.
    - Because Roe's name appears first, that means Roe is the plaintiff. The plaintiff is the person who brings the case.
    - The defendant will be the second name. So here Wade is the defendant, or the person defending against the plaintiff's case.
  - 410 is the volume number of the book series in which it can be found.
  - U.S. is an abbreviation for the United States Reports. They publish the decisions of the Supreme Court. **(PLEASE CHANGE THIS – how do we know that U.S. is the abbreviation for United States Reports? I think we should follow the original document which showed that 410 U.S. 113 is the official citation of the Supreme Court decision – do you agree?)**
  - 113 is the page number. That means you can read this case on page 113 of volume 410 of the United States Reports.
  - **1973** is the year. That means *Roe v. Wade* was decided in **1973**.

## Why is there more than one series in the citation?

- Important cases are published in more than one legal series. A full citation will include all series the case was published in. These are called "parallel citations."
- Because official legal series publish very slowly, other, unofficial series will also publish the same case. The first citation is the official citation. Parallel citations are always unofficial.

- For instance, the United States Reports is the official Supreme Court series. However, the Supreme Court Reports and U.S. Supreme Courts, Lawyer’s Edition are both unofficial reporters for Supreme Court decisions.

**INCLUDE THIS FROM THE ORIGINAL DOC here in some manner**

The parallel citations for this case are:

3. **93 S.Ct. 105** – you can also find this case at **page 105 of volume 93** of the **Supreme Court Reporter**, or

4. **35 L.Ed 2nd 147** – in **volume 35 of U.S. Supreme Court Reports, Lawyer’s Edition, 2nd series**, on **page 147**

**Do I need to look them all up?**

- No. The decision will be the same words no matter what series they are in. Also, most regular libraries only carry a few legal book series. You would not be able to look up every parallel citation without going to a law library.

**Where Can I Find a List of the Series Abbreviations?**

- If you find a series citation you don’t know, you will need to look it up.
- The guide to legal citations is called The Blue Book. You can find a copy in the Reference section. Its call number is REF KF 245 .B58 2005. It will have a list of all the legal series abbreviations. It will also be easy to spot – it’s blue.
- After you know which series to check, use the catalog or ask a librarian to see if BHCC Library carries it.

**Quick Guide:**

Roe v. Wade 410 U.S. 113, 93 S.Ct. 705, 35 L.Ed 2<sup>nd</sup> 147 (1973)

