

## RESEARCH GUIDE SERIES 3 – GENERAL LEGAL RESOURCES



### Guide 3A - FINDING A CASE: CITATIONS

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#### Deciphering a case citation

Cases are often found in several different reporters. There is an "official" reporter (the one published or sanctioned by the court), as well as privately published state and/or regional reporters. Citations are a shorthand way of describing where to find the case. A "**case citation**" specifies (1) the case name (plaintiff versus defendant), (2) the volume, reporter title, and page number where the case can be found, (3) the year of decision, and (4) any subsequent history. The court or circuit can also be specified with the year of decision, e.g., the Ninth Circuit (9th Cir. 1991). The official reporter is cited first, and is followed by a "**parallel citation**" for each reporter in which the case can be found.

#### Example:

Green v. Superior Court 10 Cal. 3d 616, 111 Cal. Rptr. 704, 517 P. 2d 1168 (1974).

Green is published in volume 10 of the third series of *California Reports* at page 616. The parallel citations indicate the case can also be found in volume 111 of *California Reporter* at page 704, and in volume 517 of the second series of *Pacific Reporter* at page 1168. The case was decided in 1974.

#### Finding a case citation

1. Use a digest (located near the corresponding reporter). Each digest has a "Table of Cases" volume, which lists case names in alphabetical order. If you know only the name of the defendant, West's digests have a "Defendant-Plaintiff Table" volume, which lists cases by the name of the defendant. For more information on using digests, and their locations in the Law Library, refer to the Golden Gate Law Library's research guide "FINDING A CASE: DIGESTS".

2. Use *Shepard's Acts and Cases by Popular Name: Federal and State* (REF KF 90 S52) if a case has a "popular name", e.g., the "Slaughter-House Cases", and you know only that name.

3. Use LEXIS to do a name segment search, name(party and party), or click on "Get a Document" by party name. Use WESTLAW and do a title field search ti(party & party), or click on the "Find a case by party name" link and enter your parties.

#### Finding a parallel citation

*Shepard's Citations* (located near the corresponding reporter) lists parallel citations in parentheses immediately following the first time a case appears in the citator.

Charts in the *National Reporter Blue Book* (KF 135 B5.8) convert citations to state reporters (which the Law Library may not have) into parallel citations to regional reporters (located downstairs). Regional reporters contain appellate decisions from more than one state, divided by geographical area, e.g., New Hampshire is in the *Atlantic Reporter*.

### **Interpreting abbreviations**

Use *Black's Law Dictionary* (Open Reserve KF 156 B53 and on dictionary stands), *Bieber's Dictionary of Legal Abbreviations*, REF KF 246 .B46 2000), or *A Uniform System of Citation (the BlueBook -Open Reserve- KF245 .B58 2000 and Reference Desk)*, to translate an abbreviation to a full title.

**For Further Information Consult a Librarian**

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