

Bluebook Citation Guide: Legal Materials

Introduction

The Bluebook citation style is widely used in American legal writing and is recommended by the Chicago Manual of Style for citing legal documents. While the Bluebook includes detailed and complex rules, this guide offers a simplified overview suitable for academic and student use.

It is important to maintain consistency in formatting—either italics or underlining may be used, but the chosen style must be consistent throughout the document.

Short Form Citations

Once a full citation is provided for a legal source, a shortened form can be used for subsequent references. The structure of these short-form citations depends on the type of authority. A commonly used abbreviation in short forms is "id.," which indicates a reference to the immediately preceding source.

Court Cases

A proper case citation includes the following:

- Name of the case (shortened to the primary party names)
- Source where the case is published
- The court of decision
- Year of the decision

Additional parentheticals may explain relevance or quote the decision, and optional "subsequent history" can follow the citation. Individual names in case names are shortened to surnames only, and procedural terms are abbreviated.

Example:

United States ex rel. Gerald Mayo v. Satan and His Staff, 54 F.R.D. 282 (W.D. Pa. 1971) ("the plaintiff has failed to include with his complaint the required form of instructions...").

Short Form:

Ex rel. Mayo, 54 F.R.D. at 282.

Constitutions

Constitutional citations begin with an abbreviated title in small caps (if available), followed by referenced subdivisions in decreasing order of scope.

Subdivision Abbreviations:

- Amendment: amend.
- Article: art.
- Clause: cl.
- Paragraph: para.
- Part: pt.
- Preamble: pmb.
- Section: §

Example:

Tenn. Const. art. IX, §3.

If the section has been amended or repealed, include that information in parentheses:

U.S. Const. amend. XVIII (repealed 1933).

There are no short-form rules for constitutions.

Statutes, Laws, and Codes

Federal statute citations should include:

- Title of the act
- Source (e.g., U.S.C.)
- Enactment year or source publication year
- Chapters or sections cited

Examples:

The Guano Islands Act, 48 U.S.C. ch. 8 §§1411–12 (2012).

Ga. Code Ann. § 39-2-17 (2016).

Utah Crim. Code § 76-7-104 (1973) (repealed 2019).

Short Form:

48 U.S.C. §§1411–12

Bills and Resolutions

To cite a bill or resolution, include:

- Title of the bill (if needed)
- Document number
- Legislative term and session
- Relevant sections
- Year of publication
- State (for state laws)

Examples:

Student Protection Act, H.R. 2625, 113th Cong. § 3 (2013).

Floor Amendment 1 to S.B. 459, 42nd Leg., 1st Sess. § 2 (N.M. 1995).

Short Form:

Ga. H.B. 677

Hearings

Hearing citations should include:

- Full hearing title
- Related bills, if applicable
- Committee name
- Legislative term and session
- Year of publication
- Statement details (speaker name and title)
- Page numbers

Examples:

Departments of Labor... Appropriations for 2003: Hearing before the H. Subcomm. on Education Appropriations, 107th Cong. (2002) (statement of Elmo Monster, Sesame Street Muppet).

Protecting America's Harvest: Hearing on H.R. 2414 Before the H. Subcomm. on Immigration..., 111th Cong. (2010) (statement of Stephen Colbert, Host, The Colbert Report).

Note: The Bluebook does not define a standard for short-form hearing citations.