

# Legal Research

It is important to understand the difference between primary and secondary sources in legal research:

**Primary** (can be legally binding) – e.g., constitutions, cases, statutes, regulations

**Secondary** (can only be persuasive) – e.g., commentaries, law reviews, records, briefs

Primary and secondary sources are searched differently. If you are not sure what type you need for your assignment, check with your professor. [UCO Library](#) has already subscribed to multiple law databases for you, available on- or off-campus. See links and tutorials below:

## Primary source searching

### Library Databases:

**Congressional Publications** (<http://library.uco.edu/d/?d=463>)

**WestLaw** (<http://library.uco.edu/d/?d=484>) – try this interactive tutorial:  
<http://uco.libwizard.com/WestLaw>

**HeinOnline-** (<http://library.uco.edu/d/?d=552>) Here is a link to HeinOnline training videos:  
<https://help.heinonline.org/article-categories/training-videos-heinonline/>

**NexisUni** (<http://library.uco.edu/d/?d=543>) – see this video for how to [View Landmark Cases in U.S. History](#). You can also search by citation or keyword in the Legal Case section too →

### Oklahoma State Courts Network:

Keyword search or browse all Oklahoma state and federal court cases, statutes, laws, constitution, etc.:  
<http://www.oscn.net/applications/oscn/start.asp?viewType=LIBRARY>

Search OSCN here if you have a specific citation for a case: <http://www.oscn.net/dockets/search.aspx>

For a **federal courts** search tool, try [FindLaw](#).

## Secondary source searching

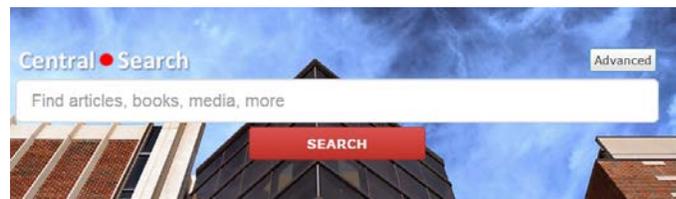
[Criminal Justice Abstracts](#) – contains scholarly journal articles on a wide variety of CJ and legal topics.

[HeinOnline](#) – In addition to primary sources (Congressional Documents, U.S. statutory materials, etc.), HeinOnline contains scholarly journal articles from law reviews and other scholarly journals.

[NexisUni](#) – contains legal news, articles from law reviews, full text newspapers and broadcast transcripts.

Other databases which may contain articles on legal issues: [ProQuest Central: Criminal Justice](#), [ProQuest Central: Social Science](#), [SocIndex](#), [Academic Search Premier](#).

Or just start at **Central Search** on our [homepage](#), which searches *many* databases all in one →



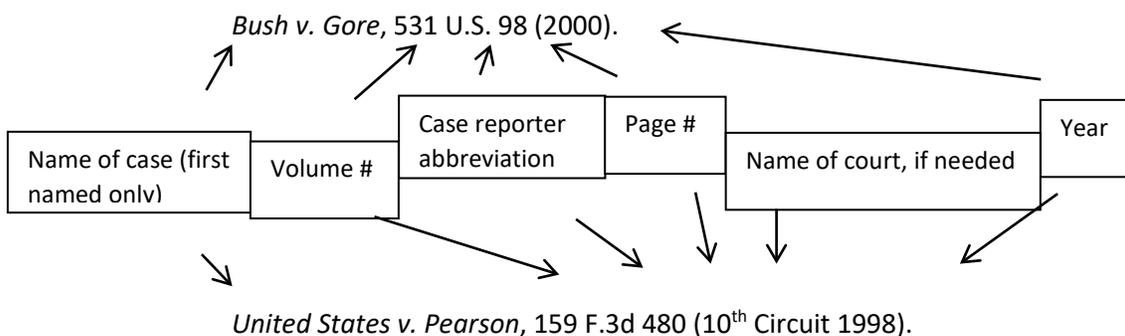
## APA Style for Legal Citation

### Citing Primary Sources (e.g., cases, laws)

You need to be able to decipher legal citations before you can create your own. First, check out this excellent guide on reading citations from the Boston College Law Library:

<http://lawguides.bc.edu/c.php?g=350907&p=2367690>

### Reference list for court cases



These are some common case reporter abbreviations – see [here](#) for a longer list:

Abbreviation	Full title	Notes
U.S.	<i>United States Reports</i>	The official reporter for U.S. Supreme Court – if this is the reporter, you do NOT need to include the court name in the parentheses
S. Ct.	<i>Supreme Court Reporter</i>	An unofficial reporter for the U.S. Supreme Court
L.Ed. or L.Ed. 2d	<i>Lawyers' Edition, United States Supreme Court Reports</i>	Another unofficial report for the U.S. Supreme Court
F., F.2d, or F.3d	<i>Federal Reporter, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> series</i>	The official reporter for the U.S. Circuit Courts of Appeal. Include the # of the circuit court in parentheses
F. Supp or F. Supp.2d	<i>Federal Supplement, 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> series</i>	The official reporter for the United States District Courts opinions.
P., P.2d, P.3d	<i>Pacific Reporter, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> series</i>	An unofficial reporter for Oklahoma as well as other states

### In-text citation for court cases:

In *Bush v. Gore* (2000), the Supreme Court decided....

...halted the Florida Supreme Court's decision to recount ballots (*Bush v. Gore*, 2000).

### Reference list for laws & statutes

Some definitions:



**Session law** is a bill that is put forward in either the House or the Senate



After it is passed by both chambers and signed by the President, it becomes a **statute**; all statutes are published in chronological order in the **Statutes at Large**



After the laws have been **codified** (usually: arranged by subject), they are published in the **United States Code (USC)**

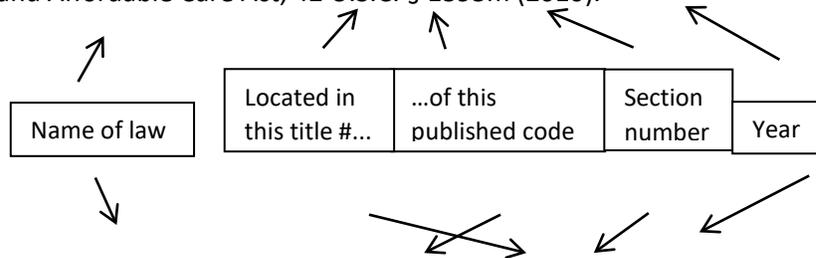
Citing a codified law is preferred. You should almost never need to cite session or statute law.

Some published compilations of codes:

Abbreviation	Title	Publisher
U.S.C.	<i>United States Code</i>	Official publisher – by the U.S. Gov't. Printing Office
U.S.C.A.	<i>United States Code Annotated</i>	Unofficial – by West Group
U.S.C.S.	<i>United States Code Service</i>	Unofficial – by LexisNexis
Okla. Stat.	<i>Oklahoma Statutes</i>	Official publisher of state statutes
O.S.	<i>Oklahoma Statutes</i>	An abbreviated form that can be used within the state only, when it is clear which "O" is meant

## Codified law examples:

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1395m (2010).



Foreign Gas Pipeline Corporations—License, Okla. Stat. tit. 52, § 2 (1907).

Or, abbreviated form within the state of Oklahoma:

Foreign Gas Pipeline Corporations—License, 52 O.S. § 2 (1907).

“Title” can be thought of as the *volume* of a particular code, and “Section” as the *page number*.

## In-text citation for laws & statutes:

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (2010) was the first major....

...insurers to cover pre-existing conditions (Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, 2010).

*Sources for more information:*

Boston College Law Library guides: [Basic Legal Research Tips](#) and [Reading Legal Citations](#)

Cornell University Library guide: [How to Cite U.S. Government Documents: APA](#)

Indiana University Library guide: [Citing U.S. Government Publications](#)

Texas A&M University Library guide: [Finding Cases and Journal Articles](#)

Legal Information Institute: [Introduction to Basic Legal Citation](#)

## Citing Secondary Sources (e.g., commentaries, reviews, briefs)

These are cited just like normal APA journal articles, except that most law journals [currently do not use DOIs](#). Follow these examples closely:

**Article from a database** – do a Web search for and include the homepage of the journal, even if you found the article in a database:

Birdsong, L. (2006). Felony murder: A historical perspective by which to understand today's modern felony murder rule statutes. *Thurgood Marshall Law Review*, 32(1), 1-26. Retrieved from <http://tmlawreview.org/>

**Article with continuous pagination, volume but no issue number:**

Kirchmeier, J.L. (2004). A tear in the eye of the law: Mitigating factors and the progression toward a disease theory of criminal justice. *Oregon Law Review*, 83, 631-730. Retrieved from <https://law.uoregon.edu/explore/OLR>

**Article freely available online (i.e. not from a database)** – if it appears to be a stable URL, you may include the direct URL for ease of access, but know that they often still break:

Fairfield, J.A.T. & Engel, C. (2015). Privacy as a public good. *Duke Law Journal*, 65(3), 386-457. Retrieved from <http://dlj.law.duke.edu/article/privacy-as-a-public-good-fairfield-vol65-iss3/>

**Article in print:**

Robinson, K.J. (2016). Comments: *Fisher's* cautionary tale and the urgent need for equal access to an excellent education. *Harvard Law Review*, 130(1), 185-240.

*Sources for more APA information:*

UCO Library's general APA handout: <http://library.uco.edu/instruction/handouts/APAStyle6th.pdf>

APA electronic guide: [libguides.uco.edu/APA](http://libguides.uco.edu/APA)

Purdue OWL (Online Writing Lab): <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/05/>

*Note:* These examples are given following APA format strictly, as is preferred in UCO's Criminal Justice programs. Be aware that many law journals, as well as some law schools, will require you to use Bluebook format instead (currently in its 20<sup>th</sup> edition in 2015, <https://www.legalbluebook.com/>), or some combination of APA and Bluebook.