



THE LAW LIBRARY: A BRIEF GUIDE

I. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Chase Law Library! Law books may at first appear intimidating, but you will gradually find them logical and easy to use. The Reference Staff is happy to help you learn your way around. If the Reference Librarian is not on duty, the Circulation Staff can tell you when someone will be available.

II. SOURCES OF LAW

In the United States, the law is derived from four sources. These four sources are constitutional law, statutory law, case law or common law, and administrative law.

A. CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

Constitutions establish the legal framework of a government, delegate powers, and define rights and liberties.

1. FEDERAL

- The Federal Constitution is printed in numerous reference works, encyclopedias, and the code.
- Example: *U.S. Code*, *U.S. Code Annotated*, and *U.S. Code Service*

2. STATE

- State constitutions are published in the state codes.
- Example: *Kentucky Revised Statutes* and *Ohio Revised Code*

B. STATUTORY LAW

Laws enacted by a legislative body.

1. FEDERAL

- Statutes: The public laws passed by the U.S. Congress, arranged in chronological order.
 - Example: *Statutes at Large*
- Codes: The public laws passed by the U.S. Congress, arranged by topics.
 - Example: *U.S. Code*, *U.S. Code Annotated*, and *U.S. Code Service*
- Legislative Histories: The reports and hearings of House and Senate Committees prior to the passage of a public law.
 - Example: *U.S. Code Congressional and Administrative News* and *Congressional Information Service (CIS)*

2. STATE

- Session Laws: Laws enacted by a state legislature, arranged in chronological order.
- Codes: State laws arranged by topic, usually with annotations.
 - Example: *Kentucky Revised Statutes* and *Ohio Revised Code*

3. LOCAL

- City and county ordinances.

C. ADMINISTRATIVE LAW

Rules and regulations created by administrative agencies.

1. FEDERAL

- *Federal Register*. A daily publication listing all proposed & final rules/regulations, and procedures of the various agencies.
- *Code of Federal Regulations*. Administrative law arranged by subject.

2. STATE

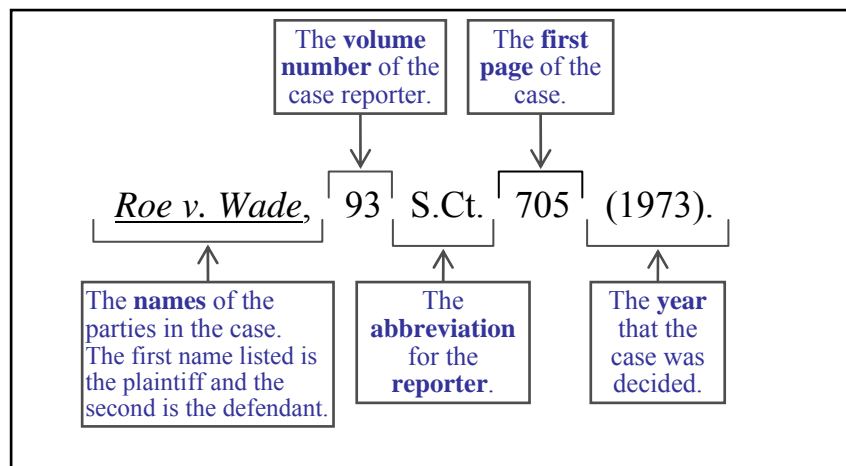
- Examples: *Kentucky Administrative Regulations (KAR)*
Ohio Administrative Code (OAC)

D. CASE LAW

The body of law formed by judgments and decrees of the courts.

1. REPORTERS

- Published volumes of case decisions. There are federal reporters, state reporters, and regional reporters.
- A *citation* is a shorthand notation of where to find a case. A citation to a court case includes the elements shown in the following example:



ABBREVIATIONS OF REPORTERS

FEDERAL REPORTERS

Abbreviation	Title	Jurisdiction
U.S.	United States Reports	U.S. Supreme Court
S. Ct.	Supreme Court Reporter	U.S. Supreme Court
L. Ed., L. Ed. 2d	Supreme Ct. Reports Lawyer's Edition	U.S. Supreme Court
F., F.2d, F.3d	Federal Reporter	U.S. Court of Appeals
F. Supp.	Federal Reporter	U.S. District Courts

REGIONAL REPORTERS

Abbreviation	Title	Jurisdiction/Coverage
A., A.2d	Atlantic Reporter	CT, DE, ME, MD, NH, NJ, PA, RI, VT, DC Municipal Ct. of Appeals
N.E., N.E.2d	North Eastern Reporter	IL, IN, MA, NY, OH
N.W., N.W.2d	North Western Reporter	IA, MI, MN, NE, ND, SD, WI
P., P.2d	Pacific Reporter	AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, KS, MT, NV, NM, OK, OR, UT, WA, WY
S.E., S.E.2d	South Eastern Reporter	GA, NC, SC, VA, WV
So., So. 2d	Southern Reporter	AL, FL, LA, MS
S.W., S.W.2d	South Western Reporter	AR, KY, MO, TN, TX

KENTUCKY REPORTERS

Abbreviation	Title	Jurisdiction/Coverage
Ky.	Kentucky Reports	Supreme Court [vols. 1 – 314 (1785 – 1951)]*
S.W., S.W.2d	South Western Reporter	Supreme Court [1886 – Date]*
Ky. Op.	Kentucky Opinions	Court of Appeals [1864 – 1886]*
S.W., S.W.2d	South Western Reporter	Court of Appeals [1976 – Date]
* <u>Note</u> : Before 1976 the Court of Appeals was the highest state court.		

OHIO REPORTERS

Abbreviation	Title	Jurisdiction/Coverage
Ohio St., Ohio St. 2d, Ohio St. 3d	Ohio State Reports	Supreme Court [1852 – Date]
Ohio	Ohio Reports	Supreme Court [1821 – 1851]
N.E., N.E.2d	North Eastern Reporter	Supreme Court [1885 – Date]
Ohio App., Ohio App. 2d, Ohio App. 3d	Ohio Appellate Reports	Court of Appeals [1913 – Date]
N.E., N.E.2d	North Eastern Reporter	Court of Appeals [1925 – Date]

2. DIGESTS

- Digests are print indices to cases, arranged by subject.
- Digests lead you to cases published in the reporters.
- There are federal, state, and regional digests.

III. ELECTRONIC ACCESS TO CASE LAW AND CODES

- A. Westlaw Pro™ can be accessed at designated work stations in the Chase Law Library.
- B. WestLaw Pro™ provides electronic access to federal and state case law and codes.
- C. Westlaw Pro™ includes KeyCite™, a method of updating your case law and code research.

IV. SECONDARY SOURCES

These are similar to non-legal reference books.

- A. Legal Encyclopedias. *American Jurisprudence 2nd Series*, *Ohio Jurisprudence 3rd SERIES* and *Encyclopedia of American Law*.
- B. Legal Dictionaries. *Black's Law Dictionary*.
- C. Periodicals. Journals published by bar associations, law reviews published by law schools, and other legal periodicals.
- D. Periodical Indexes. *LegalTrac* and *Hein Online* are legal periodical indexes available in electronic format.
 - Both databases are available via the Chase Law Library Web Site <http://chaselaw.nku.edu/library/>. Go to *Research Links* and then select *Databases*.
- E. Looseleaf Services. An in depth analysis of a subject. Service may include case law, administrative law, statutory law, editorial comments, and news information.
 - Example: *Standard Federal Tax Reporter*.

V. FOR FURTHER HELP

Robert C. Berring, *Legal Research for the 21st Century* (Chase Reserve Five Videotapes).

- Tape 1. The Basics
- Tape 2. Case Finding and the Future of Cases
- Tape 3. Citators and Secondary Source Research
- Tape 4. Statutes, Legislative History and Administrative Materials
- Tape 5. Legal Research on the Internet and Research Strategies