

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 get someone to help you. Many resources are available in print format and online. The guide will help you navigate the library and locate the materials you need.

II. SOURCES OF LAW

In the United States, the law is derived from four sources. These four sources are constitutions (constitutional law), statutes (statutory law), judicial opinions (case law or common law), and regulatory agency rules (administrative law). All four sources of law exist at both the state and federal level.

A. CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

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

1. FEDERAL

The United States 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*

Title	Citation Abbreviations	Print	Westlaw Patron Access
U.S. Constitution	U.S. CONST.	Yes	Yes
Ohio Constitution	OHIO CONST.	Yes	Yes
Kentucky Constitution	Ky. CONST.	Yes	Yes

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)*

Title	Citation Abbreviations	Print	Westlaw Patron Access
U.S. Code Congressional and Administrative News	U.S.C.C.A.N.	Yes	No
Congressional Information Service (CIS)	C.I.S.	Yes	No but available via [Proquest Database]

2. STATE

Session Laws: Laws enacted by a state legislature, arranged in chronological order.

Example: *Kentucky Acts* and *Laws of Ohio*

Codes: State laws arranged by topic, usually with annotations.

Example: *Kentucky Revised Statutes* and *Ohio Revised Code*

Title	Citation Abbreviations	Print	Westlaw Patron Access
U.S. Code	U.S.C.	Yes	Yes
U.S. Statutes at Large	Stat.	Yes	Yes
U.S. Public Laws	Pub. L. No.	Yearly as part of Statutes at Large	Yes
Laws of Ohio	Ohio Laws	Yes	Yes
Ohio Revised Code	OHIO REV. CODE ANN.	Yes	Yes
Kentucky Acts	Ky. Acts	Yes	Yes
Kentucky Revised Statutes	KY. REV. STAT. ANN.	Yes	Yes

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

Kentucky Administrative Regulations (KAR)

Ohio Administrative Code (OAC)

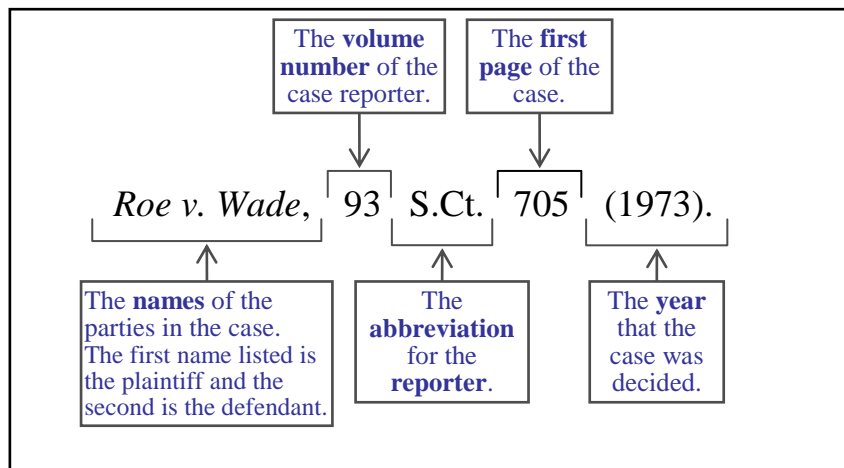
Title	Citation Abbreviations	Print	Westlaw Patron Access
Federal Register	Fed. Reg.	No	Yes
Code of Federal Regulations	C.F.R.	Yes	Yes
Kentucky Administrative Regulations	KY. ADMIN. REGS.	Yes	Yes
Ohio Administrative Code	OHIO ADMIN. CODE	Yes	Yes

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]

* Note: 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.
- We have the Kentucky and Ohio Digests.

III. ELECTRONIC RESEARCH



- a. Westlaw Patron Access is offered at designated work stations in the Chase Law Library.
- b. WestLaw Patron Access includes the following resources: All Primary Law, including Federal and State Case Law, Statutes, Administrative Materials, and Court Rules. The service includes the West Topic and Key Number features.
- c. Westlaw Patron Access also provides KeyCite, a method of updating your case law and code research.
- d. There are computer terminals in the library dedicated to Westlaw Patron Access use. You must agree to the usage terms (these should automatically be viewable as soon as the monitor wakes from sleep), then choose one of the tabs for your research (Federal, Ohio, Kentucky, or 6th Circuit).
- e. If you know a citation for what you want to view, use the “Find by Citation” option.
- f. If you don’t know a citation, choose a database (any of the check boxes on the page) and choose to search either with “Natural Language” or “Terms and Connectors”.
 1. Choose “Terms and Connectors” if you are comfortable with search operators like AND, OR, and /s.
 2. Choose “Natural Language” to search with everyday English, similar to how searches work in Google, Bing, and other internet search engines.

IV. SECONDARY SOURCES

These are similar to non-legal reference books.

- g. Legal Encyclopedias. *American Jurisprudence 2nd Series, Ohio Jurisprudence 3^d Series and Encyclopedia of American Law.*
- h. Legal Dictionaries. *Black’s Law Dictionary.*
- i. Periodicals. Journals published by bar associations, law reviews published by law schools, and other legal periodicals. Issues from the current volume (typically one volume is one year) are located in the 2ND Floor and older journals are located downstairs in the compact shelving.
- j. Periodical Indexes. *LegalTrac* and *Hein Online* are legal periodical indexes available in electronic format. Both databases are accessible via the *Databases* link posted on the Chase Law Library Web Site <http://chaselaw.nku.edu/library.html>.

V. QUESTIONS? – Be sure to contact a Reference Librarian if you need further assistance, **859-572-5396**.