

University Writing Center



APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY®

The Bluebook– An Abbreviated Guide

The Bluebook is an American set of legal citation guidelines and rules for official and government documents. Bluebook is used by both legal professionals and law students, and can be used in court proceedings, police reports, and other official government documents. Bluebook is also used in news coverage. The Chicago Manual of Style recommends its use for all citations of legal material. The Bluebook system is dense and thorough in its discussion of detail. The following is the level it recommends for the basic needs of Bluebook as it is used by students:

- Underlines and Italics may be used, but your choice should be used consistently.
- Like Chicago Manual of Style, you may use short-form citations after including a full citation. p
- Bluebook also allows the use of id. for short-form citations, i.e. only if some source is used consecutively, “id” applies to the previously referenced source.

Court Cases:

To cite a court case, the following information is needed:

- Case name
- Source where case was found
- The court where the case was decided
- The year the decision took place

A brief explanation of the case’s relevance or an important quote may be included parenthetically at the end of the citation, which may be followed by later decisions, history of the case, etc.

- Generally, summarize the title when citing the name of a case
 - If there are multiple defendants, plaintiffs, etc. only list the first party in each category.
 - Names of individuals are shortened to last name only.
 - *No first, middle, or initials*

Bluebook encourages brevity, but not at the expense of pertinent information.

Bluebook, unlike other citation sources, recommends shortening any procedural phrases, names of sources and courts, and commonly-understood abbreviations to shorten the names of the parties, e.g. “Univ.” rather than “University”

Courts tend to have official abbreviations for this purpose, which are generally conspicuously provided for anyone needing to cite them.

In the short-form citation of a case, you are free to shorten the case name to only the first party, or even an abbreviated form of that party's title. If, however, the first party is a governmental entity, geographical unit, or other such creation, this may not be a helpful citation. (Since there are so many cases where the first party is, for example, the U.S. government, citing a case name as "United States" doesn't narrow it down enough to be useful). In these cases, cite instead by the name of the second party.

- The page number in a citation is where the case begins, if you'd like to include additional page numbers to specify.
- If you are ONLY citing a specific point, you may use only that page number and eliminate the page that the case begins on

Shortened Case Name, Source at page number.

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

Hearings

When citing a hearing, include:

- The full title as published
- The relevant bills, if any
- The committee
- The term & session of the legislative body
- The year of publication
- The name and titles of the individual providing a statement
- Relevant page numbers

Title: Hearing on Bill Before the Committee, Term & Session page numbers (year) (statement of Firstname Lastname, Titles).

Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies 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, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security, and International Law, 111th

Cong. (2010) (statement of Stephen Colbert, Host, The Colbert Report, Comedy Central Studios)

Constitutions

- When citing the constitution of a governmental entity, use the abbreviated title of the constitution.
 - Then specify to which subdivision of said document you are referring.
 - Some helpful abbreviations for those subdivisions are as follows:

Amendment	amend.
Article	art.
Clause	cl.
Constitution	cons.
Paragraph	para.
Part	pt.
Preamble	pmb.
Section	§

Set the title of the constitution in small caps if possible. The subdivisions should then be listed, separated by commas in descending order.

Constitution Title subdivision, subdivision.

NC. Const. art. XII, §7.

If you are citing a section of that constitution which has since been amended or repealed, note the date of that fact in parentheses at the end of the citation, e.g.

Ala. Const. amend. XIV (repealed 2016).

If the entire constitution is no longer in effect, add the date at which the constitution was originally adopted to the citation as follows:

Fla. Const. of 1864, art. XIX.

If the section of a defunct constitution you are citing was adopted in a different year than the constitution as a whole, then include that year as well, e.g.

Ala. Const. of 1819, amend. III (1850).

There is no short form for constitutional citations.

Statutes, Laws, and Codes

To cite a federal statute, you need to include:

- The title of the act
- The source in which it is found
- The year in which it was enacted (session laws) OR the year in which the source was published (codes).
- The chapters or section(s) being referred to.
- When citing state statutes cite the appropriate section of code when possible

Act Title, Source § number (year).

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

Ga. Code Ann. § 39-2-17 (2016).

Treat statute repeals and amendments like constitutional changes cited above. Indicate the fact that it has been repealed or amended, the year it happened in parentheses at the end of the citation. Additional information may be added in the same way.

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

When citing statutes in short form, you must include the section number as well as the minimum information needed to determine which of your previously-cited authorities the citation refers to. For example:

48 U.S.C. §§1411-12

Bills and Resolutions

To cite a bill or resolution, include:

- Title of bill if needed
- Document number
- Term and session of the legislative body
- Relevant sections
- Year published

For bills passed in state legislative bodies rather than federal, you should also include the state. Here's the formula with examples:

Act Title, Document Number, Term # Legislative Body, Session § number (State year).

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).

In short-form citations, to avoid confusion one should specify the state unless citing a federal law, but it is sufficient to cite by document number.

Ga. H.B. 677