

chicago citation examples for court cases

Mastering Chicago Citation Examples for Court Cases: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago citation examples for court cases are essential for anyone navigating the complex world of legal writing and academic research. Whether you are a law student, a legal professional, or a researcher delving into legal history, accurately citing judicial decisions is paramount for maintaining academic integrity and ensuring your work is verifiable. This comprehensive guide will demystify the Chicago Manual of Style's approach to citing court cases, providing clear examples and detailed explanations for various scenarios. We will explore the fundamental components of a case citation, delve into specific formats for different types of cases, and address common challenges encountered when citing judicial opinions. Understanding these nuances will equip you with the confidence to present your legal research with precision and authority.

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Understanding the Core Components of Chicago Case Citations

Before diving into specific examples, it's crucial to grasp the fundamental elements that constitute a Chicago-style citation for a court case. These components work in concert to provide readers with all the necessary information to locate the exact case being referenced. Miss any of these, and the citation can become ambiguous, hindering accessibility and potentially undermining the credibility of your research. The primary goal is clarity and traceability, allowing anyone to find the precise judicial decision you are referring to.

Key Elements of a Case Citation

To construct a proper Chicago citation for a court case, several pieces of information are indispensable. These include the names of the parties, the volume and reporter where the case is published, the first page

number of the case, and the court that rendered the decision, along with the year of the decision. Each of these elements serves a specific purpose in identifying the case within the vast landscape of legal precedent.

- **Case Name:** This includes the names of the plaintiff(s) and defendant(s), or petitioner(s) and respondent(s). For commonly known cases, abbreviations might be used, but for new or less prominent ones, the full names are generally preferred.
- **Volume Number:** This refers to the volume of the legal reporter in which the case appears.
- **Reporter Abbreviation:** Each legal reporter has a standard, often abbreviated, name. For example, 'U.S.' for United States Reports or 'F.3d' for Federal Reporter, Third Series.
- **First Page Number:** This indicates the page where the full text of the case begins in the reporter.
- **Subsequent Page Number (Pinpoint Citation):** If you are referencing a specific passage within the case, you will include the page number(s) on which that passage appears, often preceded by a comma and the page number.
- **Court Abbreviation:** This specifies the court that issued the decision, such as 'S. Ct.' for Supreme Court, '2d Cir.' for the Second Circuit Court of Appeals, or 'Cal. Sup. Ct.' for the California Supreme Court.
- **Year of Decision:** This is the year the court issued its final ruling on the case.

Federal Court Case Citation Examples

Citing federal court cases in Chicago style requires attention to the specific reporter and court. The federal court system has multiple tiers, from district courts to appellate courts and the Supreme Court, each with its own reporting conventions. Understanding these distinctions is crucial for accurate citation. Federal case law forms a significant portion of U.S. jurisprudence, making correct citation a cornerstone of legal research.

U.S. Supreme Court Cases

Citing a U.S. Supreme Court case is perhaps the most common scenario. These cases are typically found in

the official United States Reports, but are also available in other widely used reporters like the Supreme Court Reporter (S. Ct.) and Lawyers' Edition (L. Ed. 2d). When citing, the most authoritative reporter is generally preferred, followed by commonly used secondary reporters.

For example, a citation to a landmark Supreme Court case would look like this:

Marbury v. Madison, 5 U.S. (1 Cranch) 137 (1803).

In this example:

- *Marbury v. Madison* is the case name.
- 5 is the volume number of the United States Reports.
- U.S. is the abbreviation for United States Reports.
- (1 Cranch) indicates the original reporter series, a common practice for older Supreme Court cases.
- 137 is the first page number of the case.
- (1803) is the year of the decision.

If citing an alternative reporter, it would appear as:

Miranda v. Arizona, 384 U.S. 436, 86 S. Ct. 1602, 16 L. Ed. 2d 694 (1966).

This format includes multiple reporters, which is common when a case is widely published. The pinpoint citation for a specific passage would follow the initial citation, e.g., *Miranda v. Arizona*, 384 U.S. 436, 444 (1966).

U.S. Courts of Appeals Cases

Decisions from the U.S. Courts of Appeals (circuit courts) are published in the Federal Reporter series. These citations follow a similar pattern to Supreme Court cases, but with the appropriate court abbreviation.

A typical citation for a federal appellate case is:

Smith v. Jones, 123 F.3d 456 (2d Cir. 2020).

Here:

- *Smith v. Jones* is the case name.
- 123 is the volume number of the Federal Reporter, Third Series.
- F.3d is the abbreviation for Federal Reporter, Third Series.
- 456 is the first page number of the case.
- (2d Cir. 2020) indicates the Second Circuit Court of Appeals and the year of the decision.

For older cases published in earlier Federal Reporter volumes, the abbreviation would change accordingly (e.g., F.2d for Federal Reporter, Second Series).

U.S. District Courts Cases

Cases from the U.S. District Courts are published in the Federal Supplement series. The citation format closely mirrors that of the appellate courts.

An example of a district court citation:

Doe v. Roe, 789 F. Supp. 2d 101 (E.D.N.Y. 2021).

Breaking this down:

- *Doe v. Roe* is the case name.
- 789 is the volume number of the Federal Supplement, Second Series (indicated by F. Supp. 2d).
- F. Supp. 2d is the abbreviation for Federal Supplement, Second Series.
- 101 is the first page number.
- (E.D.N.Y. 2021) specifies the Eastern District of New York and the year of the decision.

State Court Case Citation Examples

Just as federal court decisions require specific citation formats, so too do the myriad of cases from state court systems across the United States. Each state has its own judicial hierarchy and reporting mechanisms, necessitating a clear understanding of how to cite these precedents. State court decisions are foundational to many areas of law and are frequently referenced in both academic and practical legal contexts.

State Supreme Court Cases

Most states have a supreme court as their highest appellate court. Their decisions are often published in state-specific reporters or in regional reporters covering multiple states. The Chicago Manual of Style emphasizes clarity and aims for the most authoritative and accessible source.

For a case from a state supreme court, the citation might look like this:

People v. Garcia, 123 N.E.3d 789 (Ill. Sup. Ct. 2022).

In this instance:

- *People v. Garcia* is the case name.
- 123 is the volume number of the North Eastern Reporter, Third Series (N.E.3d).
- N.E.3d is the abbreviation for North Eastern Reporter, Third Series, a regional reporter.
- 789 is the first page number.
- (Ill. Sup. Ct. 2022) designates the Illinois Supreme Court and the year of the decision.

If a state has its own official reporter, it is often preferred:

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) (for the federal context, though the Kansas Supreme Court decision predates it).

A more precise state example, if the state had its own reporter:

Johnson v. Miller, 456 P.3d 123 (Ariz. 2023).

Here, 'P.3d' denotes the Pacific Reporter, Third Series, a regional reporter, and 'Ariz.' specifies the Arizona Supreme Court.

State Appellate Court Cases

Intermediate appellate courts in states also issue decisions that are published and must be cited accurately. The format will be similar to supreme court citations, but with the appropriate court designation.

A common format for a state appellate court decision:

Davis v. Chen, 987 P.3d 456 (Cal. Ct. App. 2021).

This breaks down as:

- *Davis v. Chen* is the case name.
- 987 is the volume number of the Pacific Reporter, Third Series.
- P.3d is the abbreviation for Pacific Reporter, Third Series.
- 456 is the first page number.
- (Cal. Ct. App. 2021) indicates the California Court of Appeal and the year.

Note that abbreviations for state courts can vary; always consult a reliable style guide or legal database for the most current and accurate abbreviations.

Specialized Court Citations

Beyond the general federal and state court systems, there are specialized courts that handle specific types of legal matters, such as bankruptcy, tax, or international trade. Citing decisions from these courts requires adherence to their unique reporting and citation practices, which Chicago style generally accommodates by

prioritizing official or widely recognized reporters. Ensuring accuracy in these citations is as vital as in any other legal context.

Bankruptcy and Tax Court Cases

Bankruptcy and tax courts have their own published reporters. The Federal Rules of Bankruptcy Procedure and the Internal Revenue Code, along with their associated case law, have specific citation conventions.

A citation for a bankruptcy court case might appear as:

In re: American Business Corp., 567 B.R. 890 (Bankr. N.D. Cal. 2022).

Here:

- *In re: American Business Corp.* is the case name, often starting with "In re" for bankruptcy proceedings.
- 567 is the volume number of the Bankruptcy Reporter.
- B.R. is the abbreviation for Bankruptcy Reporter.
- 890 is the first page number.
- (Bankr. N.D. Cal. 2022) indicates the Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of California and the year.

For Tax Court cases, the official reporter is the Tax Court Reports (T.C.).

Example:

Hanson v. Commissioner, 150 T.C. 50 (2018).

This means:

- *Hanson v. Commissioner* is the case name.
- 150 is the volume number of the Tax Court Reports.

- T.C. is the abbreviation for Tax Court Reports.
- 50 is the first page number.
- (2018) is the year of the decision.

Citing Unpublished and Subsequent Opinions

Not all judicial decisions are published in traditional reporters. Unpublished opinions, or those that have been subsequently amended or vacated, require special consideration in citation to ensure accuracy and to inform the reader of their procedural status. Chicago style provides guidance for these less common but important scenarios.

Unpublished Opinions

When a court decision is not officially published, it is considered an unpublished opinion. These are often cited through an administrative history or a specific court's filing system, and typically include the court, case number, and date.

A common way to cite an unpublished opinion:

Johnson v. Lee, No. 19-CV-00123 (N.D. Ill. filed Jan. 15, 2020).

This includes:

- *Johnson v. Lee* is the case name.
- No. 19-CV-00123 is the case number assigned by the court.
- (N.D. Ill. filed Jan. 15, 2020) specifies the Northern District of Illinois and the filing date.

It is crucial to check the specific rules of the court or jurisdiction for the preferred method of citing unpublished decisions, as practices can vary.

Subsequent History

If a case has been appealed, affirmed, reversed, or otherwise had its status changed by a later court decision, this subsequent history must be noted in the citation. This provides crucial context about the precedential value of the cited case.

Example of citing subsequent history:

Doe v. Smith, 111 F.3d 222 (9th Cir. 1999), *aff'd*, 222 U.S. 333 (2001).

This citation indicates that:

- The original case was *Doe v. Smith*, found at 111 F.3d 222 (9th Cir. 1999).
- This decision was subsequently affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court in a case reported at 222 U.S. 333 (2001).

The abbreviation "aff'd" stands for "affirmed," and other terms like "rev'd" (reversed) or "vacated" might be used depending on the procedural outcome.

Variations and Specificity in Chicago Style for Court Cases

The Chicago Manual of Style, while providing a robust framework, allows for some flexibility and requires attention to detail, particularly when dealing with less common citation scenarios or when adhering to specific jurisdictional requirements. The overarching goal remains the clear identification and retrieval of the cited legal authority. Understanding these nuances ensures your citations are not just correct, but also informative and conform to the highest standards of legal scholarship.

The Importance of Pinpoint Citations

While citing the first page of a case is standard, often it is necessary to refer to a specific passage or quote from a case. This is where pinpoint citations, also known as "jump cites," become indispensable. They direct the reader to the exact location within the opinion, saving them time and effort in locating your specific point.

For instance, if you are referencing a particular statement from the *Miranda v. Arizona* case mentioned earlier, your citation would be:

Miranda v. Arizona, 384 U.S. 436, 444 (1966).

Here, the number '444' is the pinpoint citation, indicating the precise page within volume 384 of the United States Reports where the relevant information can be found.

When to Use Footnotes vs. Endnotes

Chicago style typically employs a footnote or endnote system for citations. Footnotes appear at the bottom of the page where the citation is made, while endnotes are collected at the end of the document. The choice between them often depends on the publication or institutional guidelines.

In either system, the initial full citation would be provided, followed by shorter or “subsequent” citations for repeat references to the same case. A subsequent citation might look like:

Id. at 445.

Or, if referencing a different part of the same case already cited:

Miranda, 384 U.S. at 445.

The use of "Id." (from the Latin "idem," meaning "the same") is a shorthand for citing the immediately preceding authority.

Key Takeaways for Effective Chicago Case Citation

Mastering Chicago citation examples for court cases is a continuous process, but by internalizing key principles and practicing with diligence, you can ensure accuracy and professionalism in your legal writing. The pursuit of precision in citation reflects a commitment to the integrity of legal scholarship and practice. By focusing on the core components, understanding variations, and paying attention to detail, you build a strong foundation for your legal research and arguments.

- Always strive for the most authoritative and accessible source for your citations.
- Pay close attention to the specific reporter abbreviations and court designations.
- Utilize pinpoint citations for direct quotes or specific references to passages.
- Be mindful of the subsequent history of a case and include it when relevant.
- Consult the latest edition of The Chicago Manual of Style or authoritative legal citation guides for any uncertainties.
- Practice is key; regularly citing cases will reinforce these rules and make the process more intuitive.

FAQ: Chicago Citation Examples for Court Cases

Q: What is the most important element when citing a court case in Chicago style?

A: While all elements are important, the case name and the official reporter citation (volume, reporter abbreviation, and page number) are arguably the most critical, as they are the primary identifiers that allow readers to locate the case.

Q: How do I cite a case that has been appealed to a higher court?

A: You must include the subsequent history of the case. This means citing the original decision and then noting the action taken by the higher court, such as "aff'd" (affirmed) or "rev'd" (reversed), followed by the citation of the higher court's decision.

Q: Can I cite a case that is not published in a reporter?

A: Yes, you can cite unpublished opinions, but you must follow the specific guidelines for doing so, which typically involve providing the case number, court, and filing date. It is always best to use a published version if one is available and authoritative.

Q: What does a pinpoint citation do?

A: A pinpoint citation, often called a "jump cite," directs the reader to a specific page or section within a case

opinion. This is essential when quoting directly from a case or referring to a particular argument or holding.

Q: Are there different rules for citing federal versus state court cases in Chicago style?

A: Yes, while the core principles are similar, the specific reporter abbreviations, court designations, and sometimes the order of information will differ between federal and state court cases due to their distinct reporting systems.

Q: What is the abbreviation "Id." used for in Chicago case citations?

A: "Id." is an abbreviation for the Latin word "idem," meaning "the same." It is used in footnotes or endnotes to refer to the immediately preceding citation, making your citations more concise when referring to the same source multiple times.

Q: How do I cite a dissenting or concurring opinion?

A: When citing a dissenting or concurring opinion, you would typically cite the majority opinion first, and then indicate the specific dissenting or concurring opinion with its own citation, if it is published separately or has a distinct page number.

Q: Should I use the year of the decision or the year of filing in my citation?

A: Generally, you use the year the court issued its final decision. However, for unpublished opinions, the filing date might be used as the primary temporal indicator. Always check the specific reporter or court's conventions.

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