

Citing Legal Materials in APA Style

The 6th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2010) outlines the citation style for legal materials in the Appendix to Chapter 7 (pp. 216 – 224). Below are suggested formats for common types of legal publications (California and federal sources).

In Text Citations

Any time a law or a court case is mentioned in the text of a paper, include an “in text citation” in the proper format (usually in parentheses). For court cases, that includes the main party names as well as the year – e.g. (*Griswold v. Connecticut*, 1965). For laws (statutes), the preferred form includes the name of the law and the year – e.g. (Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974). APA style requires anything cited briefly in the text (e.g. in parentheses) should also have a complete listing in the *References* list.

Court cases:

(*Griswold v. Connecticut*, 1965)

For court cases, in the text cite the party name v. party name and the year.

Statutes (named):

(Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974)

For statutes (bills passed by Congress or a state legislature and signed into law), in the text cite the name of the law and the year. The name of the law can sometimes be found at the beginning of the bill as signed into a law and/or the beginning of the appropriate section of the codified version.

Statutes (no name):

(18 U.S.C. § 2258)

It is not always possible to find the name of a law, especially if the citation is to the codified version (published in the U.S. Code or one of the California codes). To cite a law (e.g. section of the USC or a California code) without a name, some authors simply include the legal citation – e.g. (18 U.S.C. § 2258) – in the text and omit the entry from the *References* list.

Citing a Court Case in APA Style

In Text Citations:

Format: (*Party v. Party*, year)

Federal Examples:

(*Griswold v. Connecticut*, 1965)

(*Christopher S. v. Stanislaus County Office of Education*, 2004)

California Examples:

(*Tarasoff v. Regents of the University of California*, 1976)

(*People v. Stockton Pregnancy Control Medical Clinic*, 1988)

References List

Format: Party v. Party, Legal Citation (Court abbreviation year)

Example Entries:

Christopher S. v. Stanislaus County Office of Education, 384 F.3d 1205
(9th Cir., 2004)

Griswold v. Connecticut, 381 U.S. 479 (1965)

People v. Stockton Pregnancy Control Medical Clinic, 203 Cal. App. 3d
225 (Cal. App. 3d 1988)

Tarasoff v. Regents of the University of California, 131 Cal. Rptr. 14 (Cal.
1976)

Legal Citation for a court case = volume # Reporter Abbreviation page number

384 = volume 384

F.3d = *Federal Supplement 3rd Series*

225 = page 225

Note: Lexis displays several different “Legal Citations” for court cases. Generally, use the Legal Citation listed first (through the first semi-colon).



APA Citation for a California Court Case

Format: Party v. Party, Legal Citation (Issuing Court Abbreviation year).

Notes:

Party names are displayed at top of court opinion in LexisNexis. (In Lexis, if the list of party names is overly long, in the upper left screen under “Show” choose “List” to display “short” party names.)

Legal Citation = volume # Reporter Abbreviation starting page #

LexisNexis often displays multiple legal citations to the same court case, one after another just below the issuing court name. In Lexis, usually the legal citation on the far left is the best, “official,” government cite to the case. Do not use the legal citation that begins with “LEXIS.”

Issuing Court: Abbreviation for court that issued ruling (Skip this if you are unable to find the abbreviation, but be sure to include the year.)

Abbreviations for Issuing Courts in California:

California Supreme Court	=	Cal.
Court of Appeal of California, First Appellate District	=	Cal. 1d.
Court of Appeal of California, Second Appellate District	=	Cal. 2d.
Court of Appeal of California, Third Appellate District	=	Cal. 3d.

LEXIS Court Decision – Full Document:

Party names
(use **Show**: List to display short names)

THE PEOPLE ex rel. RICHARD W. EICHENBERGER, as District Attorney, etc., Plaintiff and Respondent, v. STOCKTON PREGNANCY CONTROL MEDICAL CLINIC, INC., et al., Defendants and Appellants

No. C000142

Court issuing the opinion

Court of Appeal of California, Third Appellate District

Legal Citation
(use leftmost citation ending with the first semicolon)

203 Cal. App. 3d 225; 249 Cal. Rptr. 762; 1988 Cal. App. LEXIS 724

July 28, 1988

Date of opinion

PRIOR HISTORY: [***1] Superior Court of San Joaquin County, No. 183208, Nels B. Fransen, Judae.

References List Entry:

People v. Stockton Pregnancy Control Medical Clinic, 203 Cal. App. 3d 225 (Cal. App. 3d 1988)

In Text Citation: (*People v. Stockton Pregnancy Control Medical Clinic*, 1988)



APA Citation for a Federal Court Case

Issuing Court: Abbreviation for court that issued ruling (Skip this if you are unable to find the abbreviation, but be sure to include the year.)

U.S. Supreme Court	= U.S.
U.S. Court of Appeals for the nth Circuit	= 1st Cir., 2nd Cir., etc.
U.S. District Court for California	
Central District of California	C.D. Cal.
Eastern District of California	E.D. Cal.
Northern District of California	N.D. Cal.
Southern District of California	S.D. Cal.

To Display Lexis List of Decisions (with “Short” Party Names):

Change **Show** box to *List* to see short party names

Show

1 of 1

384 F.3d 1205, *2004 U.S. App. LEXIS ...

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CHRISTOPHER S., a minor, by and through Rita S., h
through Kathi R., his Guardian Ad Litem; ROBERT F.,
I item. Plaintiffs-Appellants. v. STANISLAUS COUNTY

LEXIS List of Court Decisions:

Party names

Issuing Court
U.S. Court of Appeals, 9th Circuit

Results

Christopher S. v. Stanislaus County Office of Educ., No. 03-15178 , UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT, 384 F.3d 1205; 2004 U.S. App. LEXIS 21010; 1 Accom. Disabilities Dec. (CCH) 11-172, February 12, 2004, Argued and Submitted, San Francisco, California , October 8, 2004, Filed

Legal Citation: 384 F.3d 1205

References list entry:

Christopher S. v. Stanislaus County Office of Education, 384 F.3d 1205 (9th Cir., 2004)

In Text Citation: (*Christopher S. v. Stanislaus County Office of Education*, 2004)



California Statutes:

Format 1 - Code: *(usually preferred format, using citation to California Codes):*
Name of law (if available), State Abbreviation Code Abbreviation § section
number(s) (Year if available).

Example Entry:

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act, Cal. Penal Code § 11164 et seq.

Format 2 – Bill/Chapter *(use if new law updates many code sections instead of one):*
Name of law, State Abbreviation Branch (Assemb. or S.) Bill number, Chapter
number (Cal. Stat. Year).

Example Entry:

California Fostering Connections to Success Act, Cal. Assemb. B. 12 (2010-2011),
Chapter 559 (Cal. Stat. 2010).

Federal Statutes (USC, Pub L., Stat):

In-Text: Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974

*If a formal name of the law is not available (you only have a U.S. Code citation),
some authors only include a citation in the text only, e.g.: 18 U.S.C. § 2258*

Format 1 – (US Code only):

Name of law, title # U.S.C. § section #.

Example Entry:

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974, 42 USC §§5101–5106.

Format 2 – (with Public Law and/or Statutes at Large information):

Name of law, Pub. L. ##-##, volume Stat. page, codified as amended at title
U.S.C. § section #.

Example Entry:

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974, Pub. L. 93-247, 88 Stat. 4,
codified as amended at 42 U.S.C. §§5101–5106.

Guide available online at: <http://library.csustan.edu/apalegal>

