

THE CITATION CODE

ORIGINAL REFERENCE MANUSCRIPT

A Working Reference for Law School and Practice

From the first research memorandum
to the next brief, article, or filing.

SOURCES / CITATION FORMS / WORKING METHODS

Source selection, academic writing, and local practice

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Using This Reference

A useful legal citation helps another person find the material you used, locate the part that matters, and understand the role it plays in your argument. Those are separate jobs. A correct reporter citation can point to a passage that does not support a sentence. An accurate quotation can come from a dissent rather than the court's holding. A working link can open a version that did not govern the events being discussed.

The Citation Code begins with these decisions. It is designed to remain useful as the work changes: a first research memorandum, a journal assignment, a clinic filing, an appellate brief, an article, or an internal practice guide. Read the opening chapters to establish a method. Use the source chapters while drafting. Use the closing checklists when the document is nearly finished.

This is an original research draft. It offers a coherent editorial system and selected verified court requirements. It is not a certification of conformity with every court, journal, instructor, or separately required style manual. When the receiving authority prescribes a form, apply that requirement. Retain the method of identifying, locating, checking, and explaining the source even when its presentation must change.

Three labels describe the instructions in this book:

Label	Meaning	What to do
Court requirement	An instruction tied to an identified court rule and its scope	Read the controlling provision and check for amendments or case-specific orders
Source fact	Information about a publication, document, or database	Confirm that the particular item matches the description
Citation Code practice	Our editorial recommendation for clear, consistent work	Use it when a controlling instruction does not require another approach

Unlabeled drafting recommendations are Citation Code practices. They are choices made for this reference, not assertions that every legal writer uses the same convention. Bracketed placeholders such as [first page] describe a pattern; they are not completed citations. Examples expressly labeled fictional are training materials and must not be offered as legal authority.

CourtListener supplies case metadata, opinion text, and research links for this project. Official court and government publications supply the identified requirements and source descriptions. A metadata match establishes identity; it does not establish that a case is current, binding, citable in a particular forum, or supportive of a proposition. The research record preserves the distinction.

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1. Start with the Reader's Task

1.1 Write the proposition before choosing the form

Ask what the sentence needs the source to establish. A sentence about the text of a statute needs the applicable statutory text. A sentence about a court's construction of that text needs the judicial discussion. A sentence about what a witness said needs the relevant testimony. Sometimes a sentence needs two sources because it makes two claims. Identify those claims before adding a long citation string.

Consider this fictional draft: “The tenant notified the owner on June 3, so the notice was timely.” A letter might establish when the tenant sent notice. The governing agreement or law might establish the time limit. A delivery record might establish when the owner received it. One citation to the letter cannot silently prove all three matters. Separate the factual statement from the legal conclusion and cite each supporting item.

Citation is therefore part of analysis. When no source supports the full sentence, change the sentence or continue researching. Do not solve the problem by making the citation longer.

1.2 Use four checks

Our core method is **identity, location, support, and status**. Identity asks whether the document is the one named. Location asks whether the reader can reach the passage. Support asks whether the passage justifies the claim. Status asks whether the material can perform that role in the present task.

These checks catch different errors. A case with the right name and wrong reporter page fails identity. A twenty-page citation for a one-sentence quotation may fail location. A dissent cited as a holding fails support. A vacated opinion described as controlling may fail status. Passing one check does not excuse failure of another.

Keep a short note for each important authority: the proposition, the passage, its location, and any qualification. This note becomes a reusable research asset. A bare citation in a list does not preserve the reason you thought the source mattered.

1.3 Match effort to the source's role

A central authority deserves a full source and history review. Background material still needs verification, but its research record may be simpler. Allocate effort by consequence: a jurisdictional statement, a dispositive standard, a numerical deadline, and a quotation supporting the requested relief should not depend on a search-result snippet.

If you discover the same proposition in an article and in a judicial opinion cited by the article, read the opinion before representing the proposition as the court's reasoning. The article may have summarized, criticized, or limited it. If you cannot obtain the original, identify the intermediary and avoid implying a direct reading.

1.4 Give the citation a clear attachment

Place the reference close enough to the proposition that its coverage is clear. A footnote at the end of a paragraph can be adequate for a coherent proposition, but it can become ambiguous when the paragraph contains several facts and legal conclusions. Split the paragraph or place references after the relevant clauses.

Do not assume that a citation to the last sentence supports everything before it. During review, draw an imaginary line from each citation to the exact language it supports. If the line cannot be drawn confidently, revise the attachment.

Working example — fictional. Draft: “The agency received the application in March. Its rules required a signed certification. The company qualified for an exception.” Repair the citation plan by assigning a receipt record to the first sentence, the rule provision to the second, and the exception's text plus the qualifying facts to the third. A single citation after “exception” hides the separate evidentiary work.

2. Establish the Receiving Requirements

2.1 Make a requirements sheet

Before drafting a filing or graded assignment, identify the receiving court, tribunal, journal, instructor, or supervising lawyer. Record the document type, applicable date, prescribed citation approach, formatting requirements, length limits, and record-reference system. Save the actual instruction rather than a colleague's recollection of it.

A useful requirements sheet has a field for exceptions. An individual order may address a document that a general rule treats differently. A journal may have a house supplement. A professor may require a particular edition of a manual. When two instructions appear inconsistent, determine their scope and resolve the conflict with the responsible recipient or supervisor. Do not quietly average the requirements.

Question	Entry to preserve
Who receives the document?	Court and division, course, journal, or client team
What are we submitting?	Brief, motion, memorandum, article, or other document
Which instructions apply?	Exact rule, order, assignment, or house guide
When were they checked?	Date and the version or effective date displayed
How is the record cited?	Appendix, excerpts, docket entry, transcript, or other system
What remains unresolved?	Named issue and person responsible for resolving it

2.2 Keep local requirements local

Court requirement — federal appellate proceedings. Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 32.1(a) restricts prohibitions on citing specified federal judicial dispositions issued on or after January 1, 2007. Its permission to cite does not by itself assign precedential weight. Rule 32.1(b) addresses filing and serving a copy when the disposition is unavailable in a publicly accessible electronic database. Read the rule together with the receiving circuit's applicable provisions.

Court requirement — California. California Rule of Court 8.1115(a) restricts citation or reliance on unpublished California Court of Appeal and superior court appellate division opinions in other actions, subject to the exceptions in subdivision (b). The rule separately addresses published opinions under review. The existence of a freely accessible database copy does not eliminate these distinctions.

These provisions illustrate why “I found it online” cannot answer “May I cite it here?” They address different bodies of decisions and different procedural settings. Record both the issuing court and the receiving forum.

2.3 Separate typography from source selection

A typeface instruction tells you how to display the citation. It does not tell you which decision controls, which statutory version applies, or whether a quotation is accurate. Review these questions separately.

Citation Code's default is italicized case names in running text and citations, ordinary roman type for reporter identifiers and numerical locators, and readable consistent spacing. This default is an editorial choice. A filing must satisfy the receiving court's font, spacing, and other presentation rules even when a different layout would look better in this book.

Court requirement — California briefs. Rule 8.204(a)(1)(C) calls for record references with volume and page information and similarly specific locations for electronic records. Its subdivisions on formatting and length have their own scopes. Checking the citation provision alone does not establish compliance with the rest of the rule.

2.4 Preserve the version you checked

Rules change. A bookmarked link may show tomorrow's text while your research note describes yesterday's. Preserve the effective date, retrieval date, and a saved copy when appropriate. At final review, check the official rule page again and determine whether any intervening change affects the submission.

For this draft, the official Supreme Court rules were effective March 16, 2026, and the downloaded Ninth Circuit handbook was effective June 1, 2026. Those dates identify the research baseline. They are not assurances about a later filing date.

Sources and convention notes

Supreme Court rules and guidance; Ninth Circuit rules and current handbook, FRAP 32.1; California rule 8.1115; California rule 8.204. The requirements sheet and review method are Citation Code editorial practices.

3. Build a Source Record

3.1 Capture identity before presentation

Record a source in full before abbreviating it. For an opinion, retain the displayed case name, issuing court, decision date, docket number, citation identifiers, document URL, and the particular opinion within the case. For a statute or regulation, preserve the jurisdiction, publication, provision, version date, and relevant history. For commentary, retain the author, title, publication, edition or issue, date, and locator.

A full record lets the writer later adapt the display to a court, journal, or publisher. An aggressively shortened citation may lose facts that cannot be reconstructed reliably. Keep the research record richer than the final footnote.

3.2 Record dates by function

Dates can describe different events: decision, filing, publication, enactment, effective date, amendment, update, or retrieval. Preserve the label with the date. A database upload date is not necessarily a decision date. A publication year is not necessarily an effective year. “Last visited” is not a substitute for the date of a document when the date is available.

For a changing web source, keep both the displayed publication or update date and the retrieval date if they serve different purposes. For a legal provision applied to historical events, identify the version governing those events. The newest source is not automatically the relevant one.

3.3 Distinguish the document from its container

A database hosts documents; a reporter publishes decisions; an agency page may link to a regulation, a notice, and a guidance document. Cite the item that supports the proposition. Do not let the surrounding website's name replace the identity of the underlying material.

For example, a CourtListener opinion page may group a lead opinion and separate opinions. The page is a useful access point, but a statement attributed to the court requires inspection of the relevant judicial text. Likewise, a GPO page may provide several formats of the same publication. The HTML and PDF can be access formats for one source rather than two independent authorities.

3.4 Save a source packet

Our recommended source packet contains the source file or permitted saved copy, its public access link, a short metadata record, and your proposition notes. Use a consistent file name such as court-date-shortname-version. Avoid names such as final-final2 that conceal what the file contains.

For important digital sources, a checksum helps identify whether a later file is byte-for-byte identical. A checksum does not establish authenticity or legal validity. It answers a narrower question: whether the saved bytes match the bytes previously recorded. Describe that check accurately in a research log.

Do not place confidential client documents in an open research repository. Public case examples and private matter records belong in appropriate separate storage. A public citation does not require public distribution of the entire underlying client file.

3.5 Mark verification stages honestly

Use distinct statuses such as “located,” “metadata checked,” “passage read,” “quotation checked,” and “history reviewed.” A single green checkmark tends to conceal which work remains. If someone else will rely on the source packet, name the reviewer and the date of each meaningful review.

Working example — fictional. A research assistant finds an opinion through a search engine and enters its title and URL. That item is located. After comparing the opinion's first page with the database record, it is metadata checked. After reading the cited passage and surrounding discussion, it is passage read. Its procedural history and subsequent treatment still require separate attention.

Sources and convention notes

CourtListener case-law data model; GPO authentication explanation. The source packet and staged review labels are Citation Code editorial recommendations.

4. Identify Judicial Opinions

4.1 Assemble the identity elements

A conventional reported-case reference combines the case name, reporter volume, reporter identifier, first page, and a parenthetical identifying the decision year and any needed court information. Add the pinpoint where a particular passage matters. The exact punctuation and abbreviation choices depend on the receiving instructions.

Citation Code model: [*Case name*], [volume] [reporter] [first page], [pinpoint] ([court if needed] [year]).

Each element performs work. The first page identifies the report of the decision. The pinpoint identifies the passage. The year helps distinguish decisions and situates the authority in time. Court information matters when the publication identifier does not make the issuing court clear enough for the receiving context.

4.2 Use case metadata without copying database display choices blindly

CourtListener's research record for *Ashcroft v. Iqbal* includes 556 U.S. 662 and the decision date May 18, 2009. A conventional reference is *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662 (2009). That identifies the decision. It does not identify a particular passage or assert that every proposition attributed to the case is correct.

The same record contains parallel identifiers. They identify publications or representations of the decision. Including all of them is not automatically useful. Follow any requirement for a particular reporter or parallel citation; otherwise choose a stable, appropriate identifier and add access information only when it helps the reader.

Do not substitute a database cluster ID for a legal reporter citation. Keep the cluster ID in the research record because it is useful for retrieval and deduplication. A reader-facing citation and an internal data identifier have different purposes.

4.3 Preserve the opinion's identity within the case

A lead opinion, concurrence, dissent, and combined publication can share the same case-level metadata. Before writing “the court held,” determine who wrote the passage and how it relates to the judgment. If you rely on a dissent's reasoning, identify it as a dissent. If the relevant passage appears only in a concurrence, say so.

In the inspected *Iqbal* cluster, CourtListener exposes separate opinion records as well as a combined record. This is a practical reason to track opinion-level identity. A search that finds a phrase somewhere in the case does not establish that the phrase is in the lead opinion.

Citation Code model for a separate opinion: [*Case name*], [citation], [pinpoint] ([year]) ([Justice or Judge surname], dissenting). Use a role description that matches the source. Do not infer authorship from the first name displayed on a database page.

4.4 Handle neutral citations and slip opinions

A neutral citation ordinarily identifies a decision without relying on a commercial reporter's volume and page. Preserve the identifier the issuing court actually assigned. Where the opinion uses numbered paragraphs, use those paragraph numbers for an exact locator when the applicable instructions permit or require that form. Do not convert a database's automatically counted paragraphs into purported official paragraph numbers.

If you use a slip opinion, preserve its docket number, issuing court, decision date, version, and internal pagination. Identify a slip-page locator as such when ambiguity is possible. When the decision later acquires a reporter citation, verify the corresponding passage before replacing the locator. Page 7 of a slip opinion is not necessarily reporter page 7.

Pattern only: [*Case name*], No. [docket], slip op. at [page] ([court] [decision date]). A working public link may be added when useful and permitted. The pattern must be adapted to the actual document and receiving rules.

4.5 Treat procedural history as information

Include history when it materially affects the use of the decision or when the receiving instructions require it. Identify what happened and to which decision. A later order denying a petition does not turn every statement in the lower opinion into a statement by the higher court. A modification may affect the very passage you plan to quote.

Keep a history log with the original decision, relevant later action, and your checked date. Explain uncertainty to the supervising lawyer or editor before a source is represented as current authority. Citation formatting cannot repair unresolved treatment.

Sources and convention notes

CourtListener, *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, metadata and opinion records retrieved October 8, 2026; CourtListener case-law API documentation. The displayed citation patterns are Citation Code practices illustrating conventional identity elements. This chapter makes no substantive assessment of the case's present application.

5. Find the Exact Supporting Passage

5.1 Prefer the source's own coordinates

Use the source's stable printed page, official paragraph number, section, article, or other assigned locator. A PDF viewer's page counter is often different from the page number printed on the document. Front matter, covers, and appended documents create offsets. Compare the displayed page with the visible source label before recording a pinpoint.

When no stable source locator exists, use the most precise honest alternative: a section heading, table number, timestamp, or specifically described location. Do not invent paragraph numbers because a word processor happens to display them. If you must refer to PDF page 12, identify it as a PDF page and preserve the exact file version.

5.2 Cite the amount of material the proposition needs

Choose the narrowest locator that allows a reader to evaluate the proposition fairly. A single-page pinpoint is appropriate when the passage is self-contained. A range is appropriate when the reasoning spans pages. Scattered pages should be listed separately when a continuous range would misleadingly suggest continuous support.

Citation Code retains complete endpoint numbers in examples: 104–106 rather than compressing the second number. This is a readability choice. Apply a different shortening convention when required. Do not shorten section identifiers, docket numbers, or database identifiers as though they were ordinary page ranges.

5.3 Separate first page and pinpoint

The first page of a reported opinion identifies the report. The pinpoint identifies a passage within it. Dropping the first page from an initial full citation can make the case harder to locate; substituting the first page for an actual pinpoint leaves the reader to search the entire opinion.

Pattern only: [*Case*], 100 [Reporter] 200, 207 ([court] [year]). Here 200 identifies the start of the report and 207 identifies the passage. The numbers are fictional teaching coordinates, not an actual authority.

For a short reference that follows an adequate full citation, the first page may no longer be necessary to identify the case. That shortening decision belongs to chapter 8. The need for an accurate pinpoint remains.

5.4 Check footnotes, tables, and attachments

If the proposition appears in a footnote, identify the note as well as its page where useful. If it appears in a table, identify the table and relevant row or column when ordinary pagination is insufficient. If it appears in an attachment, identify that attachment rather than assuming the main document's citation reaches it.

A source packet should record the location in a way another reviewer can reproduce. “Near the bottom” is poor durable metadata. “Table 2, column headed ‘Median,’ row ‘All districts’” is a meaningful locator if those are the source's actual labels.

5.5 Verify after conversion

Conversion can change location. An HTML opinion may include star pagination; a downloaded PDF may display reporter pages; a scanned file may use image-page counts. Recheck the passage when moving between them. OCR search is a way to find a candidate passage, not proof that the visible text matches the extracted text.

For quotations, compare the final text against the visible source. Watch for dropped negatives, mistaken section symbols, hyphenated line endings, and digits read as letters. A perfectly formatted reference to a corrupted quotation remains a defective citation.

6. Explain the Source's Relationship to the Sentence

6.1 State the relationship before choosing a signal

Ask whether the source directly states the proposition, supports an inference, supplies an analogy, offers background, or conflicts with the claim. This classification should come from reading the source. Do not add a familiar introductory word merely because the sentence looks unfinished without one.

Citation Code favors direct explanations when a compact signal would hide an important qualification. “The court reached a similar result under a different statute” may communicate more than an unexplained string of authorities. The explanation belongs in the sentence or a concise parenthetical, depending on how central it is to the reasoning.

6.2 Use a small, deliberate vocabulary

The following choices describe Citation Code's working practice. A required style manual may prescribe more detailed ordering, capitalization, punctuation, or combinations.

Relationship	Citation Code drafting choice
Source directly states the proposition or supplies the quoted words	Place the citation directly with the proposition; no extra signal is necessary in our house practice
Source supports the stated inference	Use “See” and explain the inference if it is not apparent
Source provides an analogous rule or setting	Explain the analogy in words; “Cf.” alone may be too cryptic
Source provides another example	Use “See also” when the additional support adds value
Source conflicts with the proposition	State the conflict openly and explain its significance
Source is background rather than support	Label it as background or further discussion

The point is accurate characterization. A signal cannot turn a weak analogy into direct support or make adverse authority disappear.

6.3 Write useful explanatory parentheticals

A parenthetical should tell the reader why the source is there. Identify the relevant action, reasoning, limitation, or factual comparison. Avoid a vague parenthetical such as “discussing notice” when the useful point is that the court distinguished mailing from receipt.

Fictional drafting example: “(distinguishing the date a notice was mailed from the date it was received).” This explanation names the relevant distinction. It does not claim the hypothetical case controls a different notice statute. If the distinction rests on materially different wording, say so in the analysis.

Keep quotations inside parentheticals faithful and brief. Do not patch together words from several passages without showing the edits. If the explanation needs a paragraph, move it into the text instead of burying the analysis in a long parenthesis.

6.4 Organize multiple authorities by purpose

A string citation should have an intelligible reason for its order. Group sources that perform the same job, then explain a different group if it performs another job. Follow the receiving instructions for formal ordering. Within that constraint, help the reader see the controlling authority, the additional support, and any qualifications.

Do not add a case solely to make the list look impressive. Every additional authority creates verification work and another possible mismatch. Prefer a small number of well-selected authorities to a long unexplained list. When breadth is itself the proposition—for example, that several jurisdictions take different approaches—organize the examples to show the comparison.

6.5 Recheck support after editing the sentence

A citation that supported yesterday's narrow sentence may not support today's broader one. Replacing “may” with “must,” deleting a factual qualification, or changing “some courts” to “courts” can alter the proposition without altering the citation. Review the source again when the claim changes.

Use a final support pass that reads the prose first and the source second. The question is not whether the source contains similar words. It is whether the source, in context, supports the precise proposition now being presented.

7. Quote and Edit Faithfully

7.1 Preserve meaning and visible wording

A quotation makes a stronger representation than a paraphrase: the words between quotation marks are presented as the source's words, subject to disclosed alterations. Read the surrounding passage before selecting the quotation. A sentence beginning with “however” or referring to “that rule” may depend on context that disappears when isolated.

Compare the final quotation with the source after editing. Do not rely only on a copied excerpt in your notes. Notes may contain your own brackets, omitted words, or an OCR error. The quotation should be checked against the version actually cited.

7.2 Make alterations intelligible

Citation Code uses brackets to identify inserted or substituted explanatory material and ellipses to identify meaningful omissions within a quoted passage. Apply the receiving style's detailed punctuation rules. Regardless of typography, an edit must not change the source's meaning or conceal a limitation.

Fictional source: “The committee may accept a late application if the applicant supplies the missing certification.” A quotation stating that the committee “may accept a late application” omits the condition. If the condition matters to the proposition, include it or explain it in the surrounding sentence. An ellipsis is not permission to suppress a material qualification.

An inserted noun can clarify a pronoun, but confirm that the noun is the pronoun's actual referent. If a passage says “it,” replacing it with “[the agency]” is inaccurate when “it” refers to the reviewing court. Use a paraphrase when too many substitutions are needed for the quotation to make sense.

7.3 Distinguish your emphasis and the source's emphasis

When emphasis is significant, identify whether it appeared in the source or was added. Do the same when omitting a citation or footnote would affect the reader's understanding of where the words originated. Do not describe a court as creating language that it was quoting from an earlier authority.

Read a quotation within a quotation carefully. Determine which speaker owns which words. When the underlying source is important, obtain it and verify the passage directly. When you rely on the intermediary, make that relationship apparent.

7.4 Choose a readable quotation layout

Citation Code recommends setting an extended quotation as a block when its length or structure would make the surrounding paragraph hard to read. This book does not impose a universal word-count threshold for all filings. The receiving rules control indentation, line spacing, quotation marks, type size, and treatment of lengthy quotations.

Introduce the quotation with a sentence that explains its purpose. Follow it with analysis if the connection to the issue is not self-evident. A long quotation should not substitute for explaining why the quoted reasoning applies.

For a short quotation embedded in a sentence, ensure that your sentence remains grammatical without falsely suggesting that the source used your surrounding words. If necessary, rewrite your introduction rather than editing the source into a new grammatical structure.

7.5 Treat quotation review as a separate pass

Check wording, omissions, insertions, emphasis, punctuation, locator, attribution, and context. Then check whether the quotation remains necessary. Some drafts become clearer when a long passage is replaced by an accurate paraphrase and a precise citation. Paraphrasing still requires faithful attribution and support.

Review exercise — fictional. The source says, “We do not decide whether the rule applies to an unsigned notice.” A draft quotes “the rule applies to an unsigned notice.” The defect is not a missing introductory signal. The draft reverses the source's meaning. Restore the limitation or remove the quotation and state what the court actually decided.

8. Shorten References Safely

8.1 Establish an unambiguous full reference

A short citation depends on a reader being able to identify its antecedent. Give an adequate full reference before introducing a shortened form. When a document may be divided, excerpted, or read by section, repeat enough identity information at the new boundary to make the reference usable.

Citation Code favors a recognizable short name plus the source identifier and pinpoint over an opaque abbreviation. Saving six characters is rarely valuable if it makes the reader search several pages backward.

Pattern: [*Short case name*], [volume] [reporter] at [pinpoint]. For a book, use [author surname], [short title], at [page], with a note cross-reference when required. These are house patterns, subject to the receiving instructions.

8.2 Use immediate-reference forms narrowly

An immediate-reference word such as *Id.* is useful only when the preceding source is unmistakable. Citation Code's editing practice is to avoid it after a citation containing several sources or when an intervening reference makes the antecedent uncertain. Use a short name instead.

An immediate-reference form with a new pinpoint still needs the correct new location. Without a new locator, it may suggest the same location as the preceding reference. Do not make a reader guess whether “same source” also means “same page.”

After moving paragraphs, recheck every immediate-reference citation. A word processor can preserve the text while changing the source to which it now appears to refer. This is one of the most common ways a correct draft becomes an incorrect final document.

8.3 Keep short names distinguishable

Two sources may share an author, a party name, or a generic title. Use a longer short title or another distinguishing element when necessary. If a brief cites several cases involving the same government official, the official's surname alone may be a poor short form.

Maintain a short-name list for long documents. It should map each approved short name to one full source. A collision in that list is an editing problem to resolve before the citations spread through the document.

For organizations, introduce an abbreviation only when it will recur enough to help. Retain the organization's full name in the source record. Do not create abbreviations that readers are likely to mistake for courts, reporters, statutes, or familiar legal terms.

8.4 Make note cross-references maintainable

Use automatic cross-reference fields where the drafting software supports them. Update the fields after reorganizing footnotes and again after conversion to PDF. A visible note number can be correct in Word and wrong in an exported version if the fields were stale.

Distinguish a cross-reference to your own discussion from a citation to an external source. “See Part III” directs the reader within your document. A source citation identifies the authority supporting the proposition. Internal navigation cannot replace missing support.

Review exercise — fictional. Note 14 cites an article. Note 22 refers to “supra note 14.” A new note is inserted before the article, but the number in note 22 was typed manually. The repair is to update the reference and check the destination, not merely to verify that note 14 exists.

9. Cite Constitutions and Legislation

9.1 Identify the jurisdiction and provision

Constitutional and statutory citations begin with the legal instrument, not the website used to find it. Preserve the jurisdiction and the source's own divisions: article, amendment, section, clause, subsection, paragraph, or another assigned label. Follow those divisions down to the provision that matters.

Constitution model: U.S. Const. art. I, § 8, cl. 3. This identifies the Commerce Clause location in the Constitution. The National Archives transcription is a direct access source for the text. A proposition about how a court interprets the clause ordinarily needs the relevant judicial authority as well.

When referring to a state constitution, identify the state clearly. Do not assume the reader will infer it from the surrounding dispute. If comparing historical versions, preserve the version and amendment information necessary to understand the comparison.

9.2 Distinguish code provisions from enactments

A code organizes law by subject. A session law identifies an enactment. The two references answer related but different questions. Use the codified provision when discussing the provision in the code, and use the enactment when discussing what a particular act enacted, amended, or made effective.

Source fact. GPO describes the United States Code as a subject-matter codification of general and permanent federal laws, with main editions and cumulative supplements. Its guide distinguishes titles enacted into positive law from other titles. The distinction is a reason to preserve the publication and version carefully, rather than treating any online reproduction as interchangeable evidence of the law.

Court requirement — Supreme Court filings. Rule 34.5 ordinarily directs references to codified federal statutory provisions to the United States Code, with Statutes at Large citations for provisions not classified there. Additional or alternative citations have a stated relevance or necessity condition. Apply that instruction within its Supreme Court context.

9.3 Give the edition or version meaning

The inspected 2024 compilation supplies this example: **28 U.S.C. § 1331 (2024)**. The parenthetical here identifies the compilation used for the example. It does not mean Congress enacted the provision in 2024 or that the text has been checked for every later amendment.

If the work requires current law, check current official resources and intervening enactments. If the work concerns past conduct, identify the law applicable at the relevant time. Record both the temporal question and the version used to answer it.

Avoid a bare “current through” assertion copied from an unrelated page. The currentness statement must belong to the actual source and should be preserved in the research record. When a statutory amendment has multiple effective dates, do not infer applicability solely from the enactment date.

9.4 Keep nested subdivisions intact

For a provision with several levels, preserve each needed level in order. The inspected 2024 United States Code publication includes **5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(3)(A) (2024)**. The string (a)(3)(A) identifies a nested location. Removing (3) would direct the reader to a different or incomplete location.

In our house practice, use a section symbol for a single section and a double section symbol for multiple sections, with spacing that keeps the symbol and number readable. Spell out “section” when doing so improves ordinary prose or when required. Do not use a section symbol for a division the source calls an article merely to make the citation look uniform.

If citing a range, confirm that all the intervening provisions are relevant. A range should not hide a repealed or unrelated provision. If only two nonconsecutive provisions matter, list them separately.

9.5 Track bills by Congress and version

A bill number alone is incomplete across time because numbers recur in successive Congresses. Record the Congress, chamber, number, version, relevant section, and date. An introduced bill, an engrossed bill, and an enrolled bill are different versions. Do not describe a bill as enacted based on its title or on a search result for a later version.

Pattern only: [Bill designation and number], [Congress], § [section] ([version/date]). Preserve the official version code in the source packet even if the final style expresses the version in words. GPO's bill guide explains the publication's metadata and version information.

Legislative history materials also have distinct identities. A committee report, hearing, floor statement, and bill text should not be cited as though they were the same source. Identify the document type, Congress, committee or speaker where relevant, number, date, and precise passage. Explain the role the material plays in the analysis.

Sources and convention notes

National Archives Constitution transcription; GPO United States Code guide; 28 U.S.C. § 1331, 2024 compilation; 5 U.S.C. § 552, 2024 compilation; Supreme Court rules, rule 34.5; GPO public laws guide; GPO congressional bills guide.

10. Cite Regulations, Rules, and Agency Materials

10.1 Name the type of material

An agency can publish regulations, proposed regulations, adjudicatory decisions, notices, guidance, manuals, letters, and explanatory webpages. Begin by identifying which item you have. The agency's name does not give every document the same legal effect.

Read the document's status language. A proposed rule is not an adopted rule merely because its text resembles regulatory language. A guidance document may explain an agency's position without amending the codified regulation. A press release may announce action while omitting the qualifications contained in the actual instrument.

10.2 Preserve title, section, and version

A conventional CFR citation identifies the title number, publication, and section. **1 C.F.R. § 1.1 (2024)** identifies the definitions provision in the inspected 2024 annual title 1 publication. The section number belongs to the source; do not replace it with the page on which an online search happened to find the text.

The electronic and annual publications have different update practices. A source packet should identify which was used and preserve its date information. When a proposition turns on a historical version, save that version rather than relying on a link whose target changes over time.

The research packet for this book contains both annual CFR title 1 and a later eCFR title 1 snapshot. Their separate storage makes comparison possible. Similar text in those two files is evidence about those files, not a general conclusion that the publications always match.

10.3 Distinguish publication and effective dates

A Federal Register document can have a publication date, effective date, comment deadline, and other dates. Record each by its function. A citation locating a document in the Federal Register does not by itself establish when its provisions began to govern.

Pattern only: [Document title], [volume] Fed. Reg. [first page], [pinpoint] ([publication date]) ([status or codification information when useful]). Confirm whether you are citing the preamble, amendatory instructions, regulatory text, or another portion. Those portions can perform different jobs in the argument.

When tracing an amendment, connect the published document with the affected code provision. Check corrections and later changes before relying on a date or quotation. If the question concerns the agency's explanation, cite the explanatory passage. If it concerns the operative codified language, identify that language directly.

10.4 Identify court rules by rule system

“Rule 12” is not enough when several rule systems are in play. Identify the federal, state, local, or tribunal rule set. Preserve subdivisions and the version relevant to the work.

Citation Code model: Fed. R. App. P. 28(a)(8)(A). That form identifies the particular provision requiring an appellant's argument to include contentions and reasons with citations to relied-on

authorities and record portions. It does not stand for every briefing requirement in the appellate rules.

For a local rule, include the court identity in the form expected by that court. Keep the local rule separate from a similarly numbered national rule. A handbook that prints both does not merge them into one source of authority.

10.5 Cite agency decisions as decisions

Record the agency or tribunal, proceeding name, decision or docket number, issuance date, source publication if any, and pinpoint. Determine whether the document is initial, final, recommended, modified, or under review. Use the status the issuing institution assigns; do not guess from the file name.

Pattern only: [*Proceeding name*], [decision identifier], at [page or paragraph] ([agency or tribunal] [date]). A public URL can help retrieval. The URL should supplement the document identity rather than replace it.

When a document is confidential or accessible only in a private matter system, follow the receiving rules for submission and access. Do not invent a public link or imply that the document can be independently retrieved from a database that does not contain it.

Sources and convention notes

GPO CFR guide; GPO Federal Register guide; 2024 CFR title 1 bulk XML; eCFR title 1 bulk XML; Ninth Circuit handbook, FRAP 28(a)(8)(A). The agency-decision and Federal Register patterns are Citation Code editorial models to be completed from the actual source.

11. Cite Litigation Documents and Records

11.1 Separate authority from evidence

A judicial opinion supplies legal reasoning or a disposition. A complaint records allegations. A declaration supplies a declarant's statements. A transcript records proceedings. A citation to one document does not transform its contents into another type of material.

Use verbs that preserve the distinction: the complaint alleges, the witness testified, the order directed, the court held. If a matter is disputed, a citation to a party's statement does not make it undisputed. The prose should describe what the source establishes and what remains contested.

11.2 Use the receiving court's record system

The same underlying document may appear in the docket, an appendix, excerpts of record, and a working binder, each with different numbering. Use the location the receiving court requires. Keep a crosswalk internally so the team can find the original quickly.

Court requirement — Ninth Circuit. Circuit Rule 28-2.8 addresses citations to excerpts of record for record assertions, with specified treatment of background facts and filers exempt from the excerpts requirement. Check the actual rule and applicable exemption before using direct docket citations as a substitute.

Court requirement — California appellate briefs. Rule 8.204(a)(1)(C) requires volume-and-page record references and comparably specific locations in electronic records. The fact that a document is attached to a brief does not itself answer whether the required record citation has been supplied.

11.3 Make docket citations reproducible

For a docket document, preserve its title, docket entry number, attachment number if any, filing date, and relevant internal page or paragraph. Distinguish the main filing from its exhibits. Docket entry 18 and attachment 18-2 can be different documents.

Fictional model: Declaration of Lena Ortiz ¶ 7, ECF No. 18-2. This model presupposes that the receiving context already identifies the case and accepts this record-reference system. In an article discussing multiple cases, include enough case and docket identity to distinguish the filing.

If the document has both a printed page number and an electronic header page number, follow the court's instructions and identify the system clearly. Do not alternate between systems without telling the reader.

11.4 Cite transcripts and exhibits precisely

For testimony, record the transcript date, witness or proceeding, page, and line numbers when available and appropriate. **Fictional model:** Ortiz Dep. 42:6–43:2 (June 9, 2026). That identifies a passage crossing a page boundary; it should not be compressed into an ambiguous line range.

For exhibits, identify the exhibit designation and the location within it. A Bates number may be useful, but confirm that the recipient has a record copy using those numbers. If a file contains multiple documents, the file name alone is a poor locator.

For audiovisual evidence, preserve the exact recording and use timestamps tied to that version. Editing the opening of a recording shifts every later timestamp. A transcript can aid access, but a transcript and a recording are distinct materials; cite the one that actually supports the proposition.

11.5 Audit after assembling the record

Record assembly can change page numbers. Recheck every affected reference after pagination, redaction, exhibit insertion, or replacement of a scanned file. Confirm that the final filed record contains the cited page and that the page remains legible.

Working check — fictional. The draft cites appendix page 87. A corrected cover and two missing pages are inserted ahead of the document. The new appendix places the passage on page 90. Updating the table of contents without updating the brief leaves a broken reference. Check both the citation and the actual final page.

Sources and convention notes

Ninth Circuit rules, circuit rule 28-2.8; California rule 8.204. All named witnesses, docket entries, transcript coordinates, and appendix scenarios in this chapter are fictional training examples.

12. Cite Scholarship and Digital Publications

12.1 Identify authorship and the work

For a book, preserve the author or editor, title, edition, relevant page or section, publisher information when needed, and publication date. For an article, preserve the author, article title, journal or publication, volume, first page or article identifier, pinpoint, and date. Distinguish an edited collection from a chapter within it.

Fictional book model: Nora Bell, *Evidence in Motion* 73–75 (2d ed. 2026). **Fictional article model:** Omar Vale, *Designing Readable Records*, 12 Harbor Legal Studies 41, 49 (2025). These sources are invented to demonstrate components. Do not include them in an authority list as real publications.

Use the title page, publication record, or article itself to verify metadata. A bookstore listing may abbreviate a title or combine editions. A citation manager may import a book review's metadata instead of the reviewed book's metadata.

12.2 Distinguish editions and versions

Page numbers can change between editions, ebook formats, preprints, accepted manuscripts, and final publications. Cite the version you actually used. If a final published version exists and the task calls for it, obtain that version and verify the passage rather than simply changing the date in a preprint citation.

For a looseleaf or continuously updated work, preserve the relevant update information and a stable section locator if the publication uses one. Do not invent a single publication year for a work whose cited content has a more specific revision date.

12.3 Make web references survive beyond the link

Record the author or responsible organization, page or document title, publication or update date, website or series where helpful, and URL. Add a retrieval date when the content changes or lacks stable date information and the receiving instructions call for it. Prefer a document's stable public page over a temporary search-results URL.

A title and author help the reader recover a source if the link later fails. A URL alone may reveal neither. Remove tracking parameters when doing so preserves the destination, but retain parameters that select the actual document or version.

An archived copy can preserve what you saw. It does not prove that the content was accurate, authoritative, or current when you saw it. Preserve the original URL and archive date so the role of the archive remains clear.

12.4 Use persistent identifiers honestly

A DOI, repository identifier, or accession number can make retrieval easier. Confirm that it resolves to the work and version being cited. Do not assume that a syntactically plausible identifier belongs to the source merely because a tool generated it.

For datasets, preserve the creator, title, release or snapshot date, version, repository, and identifier. If your claim comes from an analysis you performed, describe the selection and

method separately. The dataset citation identifies the input; it does not establish the validity of your calculation.

For software used in a scholarly analysis, record the version and the role it played. A tool that extracted citations did not necessarily verify their legal significance. A spreadsheet that calculated a percentage did not verify the underlying counts.

12.5 Cite audiovisual and unusual sources by function

For a recording, preserve the creator or speaker, title, event or series, date, platform or archive, and timestamp. For an interview, identify the participants, date, form, and availability as appropriate to the assignment and permissions. For a social-media post, preserve the account identity, date, the relevant text or description, and a stable link or retained copy where permitted.

The source's role remains the central question. A public post may establish that a statement was made; it does not automatically establish the truth of the statement. A lecture may explain a doctrine; the governing legal source still needs to be checked before that doctrine is represented as controlling law.

Sources and convention notes

This chapter supplies Citation Code editorial models and source-handling practices. Its invented bibliographic examples are expressly fictional. Actual publication metadata must be obtained from the source institution or publication before a model is completed.

13. Approach International, Foreign, and Tribal Sources

13.1 Begin with the issuing legal system

Do not force every legal source into a United States reporter pattern. Identify the jurisdiction or institution, the type of instrument, the official identifier, the date, and the source's own locator. Preserve native citation information in the research record before adapting its display for an American reader.

This chapter is an orientation for unfamiliar sources. It is not a complete citation system for every country, international institution, or Tribal jurisdiction. A useful unfamiliar-source citation should make its limits visible while giving the reader enough information to find the actual document.

13.2 Separate treaty text from treaty status

A treaty text and a party-status record answer different questions. The text identifies the terms. Status information can identify participation, reservations, declarations, or relevant dates. If the proposition depends on whether a treaty bound a particular state at a particular time, obtain the necessary status material instead of relying only on the treaty's text.

Citation Code example: U.N. Charter art. 2, para. 4. The United Nations publishes the Charter's full text with article and paragraph divisions. This example locates a provision. It does not decide how the provision applies to a particular dispute.

For another treaty, record its full title, date, official registration or publication identifier where available, and provision. Distinguish signature, entry into force, accession, and domestic implementation. If the argument turns on one of these events, cite the source establishing that event.

13.3 Identify international decisions by proceeding and document

An international proceeding can produce orders, judgments, advisory opinions, separate opinions, and later compliance materials. Identify the particular document, not just the case's short name. Use the institution's document date, identifier, and paragraph or page numbering.

The International Court of Justice's decisions collection is a starting point for locating the relevant judicial document. A press release about a judgment is a separate source. If the proposition concerns the judgment's reasoning, read and cite the judgment itself.

Pattern only: [*Proceeding*], [document type], [official citation or identifier], para. [number] ([institution/date as needed]). Identify a separate opinion and its author when that is the source of the passage.

13.4 Preserve foreign court identifiers and translations

For foreign judgments, preserve the issuing court's identity, neutral citation or official report information, decision date, and paragraph or page locator. The United Kingdom National Archives' Find Case Law service illustrates a public institutional access route. Its collection should not be treated as a statement that every judgment from every UK court is available there.

When relying on a translation, identify the version and translator or institution if available. Distinguish an official translation from your own translation or a third-party rendering. If a translated term is central to the argument, explain the choice rather than silently replacing it with a supposedly equivalent domestic legal term.

Keep the original-language title in the source record. An English short title can assist navigation, but it should not erase the information needed to find the original document.

13.5 Research Tribal sources on their own terms

Identify the Tribal nation, court or legislative body, source publication, provision or decision identifier, and applicable version. Do not assume that a neighboring state's rules govern a Tribal court or that all Tribal jurisdictions use the same code structure.

Use the issuing nation's public legal resources where available and check the receiving tribunal's instructions. A third-party collection may provide access without establishing completeness or official status. If a needed source is unavailable publicly, record the access limitation and seek an appropriate authorized copy.

Do not infer customary law or institutional practice from an incomplete database entry. Cite the actual material that supports the proposition and state the scope of what you inspected. The absence of an item from a general legal database is not proof that no relevant Tribal authority exists.

Sources and convention notes

United Nations Charter text; International Court of Justice decisions; UK National Archives Find Case Law. The source-identification and translation practices are Citation Code recommendations. No jurisdiction-specific Tribal citation rule is asserted here.

14. Work Across Law School and Practice

14.1 First-year research and writing

Use early assignments to learn the relationship between a sentence and its support. Keep a proposition list beside the draft. For each legal rule, identify the authority, the relevant passage, and the facts or procedural setting that limit its use. For each material factual statement, identify the source in the assignment record.

Follow the assignment's prescribed style and source limits. A closed-universe exercise tests work with a defined packet; adding outside authority can violate the assignment even if the authority is real. A research memorandum may ask for an objective assessment rather than an advocacy presentation. Citation choices should fit that task.

Before submission, explain one citation aloud: what each component identifies, where the reader will land, and why the source supports the sentence. If you cannot explain those points, the citation is not ready merely because its punctuation looks familiar.

14.2 Journal and seminar work

Long scholarly projects require version control. Assign each source a stable internal record and track the approved short form. Record whether the cited passage was checked against a scan, a final publication, or another version. When an editor changes the proposition, revisit the support rather than approving the old citation by habit.

A journal cite-check should separate retrieval, quotation verification, substantive support, and house-style review. The same editor may do several tasks, but the record should show which tasks were completed. A technically polished footnote may still depend on an unread source.

For a seminar paper, retain the search and selection method when making empirical claims. “Most courts” is a claim about a population, not a synonym for “the cases I happened to find.” A convenience sample needs to be described as such. A literature review should explain its scope without pretending to be exhaustive.

14.3 Moot court and clinics

Moot court records often supply artificial names, dates, and record pagination. Treat the packet as the assigned source and distinguish it from real-world authority. Do not allow a fictional citation from a problem to enter a reusable real-case database without a clear label.

In clinics, source handling intersects with client work. Use the authorized matter system for client documents, preserve confidentiality, and follow supervisory requirements. A citation exercise may be low stakes; a filed assertion about a client's record is not. Review the actual final submission, including attachments and redactions.

Build habits that transfer: record the governing instructions, identify the source, locate the passage, check the support, and verify the final form. The document changes; the method remains useful.

14.4 Practice teams and reusable work product

An old brief can be a starting point, but its citations belong to the time, forum, facts, and version of law for which it was written. Reusing the prose without rechecking those elements can carry old defects into a new matter.

Maintain reusable research notes with a “last substantively checked” date and a statement of scope. Distinguish a formatting update from a legal update. Fixing italicization does not justify changing the substantive review date.

When a team shares research, assign ownership of unresolved questions. A note saying “check this” becomes useful only when someone is responsible for the check and knows what would resolve it. Before filing, identify which unresolved issues affect the representations in the document.

14.5 Make feedback reusable

Classify corrections by cause: wrong source, wrong version, wrong locator, overstated support, ambiguous short form, or presentation mismatch. This makes feedback useful beyond the corrected line. A student who repeatedly confuses PDF pages with printed pages needs a locator habit, not another memorized punctuation rule.

Keep a brief personal correction log. Include the error, the reason, and the check that would have caught it. As the same pattern disappears from later work, retire it from the active checklist so the checklist remains manageable.

15. Use Data and Automation Responsibly

15.1 Ask what a tool actually checked

A citation extractor recognizes patterns. A database lookup may match a reporter citation to a case. A link checker tests a destination. A citation manager formats stored metadata. Each tool can help, but none of these operations alone proves that the source supports the legal proposition.

Read a tool's result as a statement about its actual function. “Matched” should not become “legally valid.” “URL returned a page” should not become “the cited document is present.” Some websites return an ordinary successful HTTP response for an error page or access challenge. Inspect the returned content.

15.2 Distinguish cases, clusters, opinions, and citations

CourtListener's data separates court records, dockets, opinion clusters, individual opinions, and citation records. A cluster can group related opinions in one decision. Several citation strings can identify the same cluster. A single docket can contain more than one decision.

Counting citation strings therefore does not count distinct cases, and counting opinion records does not necessarily count distinct decisions. Before reporting a number, name the unit. Keep the database IDs needed to join records without confusing them with reader-facing legal citations.

For the manuscript's examples, preserve both the cluster identity and the specific opinion used. Deduplicate parallel citations at the cluster level when studying decisions, but retain each citation string when studying publication identifiers. The analytical question determines the correct unit.

15.3 Keep bulk data's limits visible

A bulk snapshot describes the provider's data at a stated time. It can contain missing fields, historical courts, duplicate representations, inconsistent source strings, or records added from different collections. A large dataset increases opportunities for research; it does not eliminate the need for source review.

The CourtListener court snapshot used in this project contains 3,361 records. That is a database-row count, not a count of currently operating United States courts. The live MCP court endpoint reported a different total during acquisition. The bulk and live sources were preserved separately rather than silently made to agree.

Citation-frequency statistics also need context. A high citation count can reflect many kinds of treatment. It does not itself measure approval, precedential weight, current validity, or pedagogical quality. If using frequency to select examples, describe it as a selection method and read the selected material.

15.4 Design a check that can fail

A useful verification process can produce “not found,” “ambiguous,” “wrong name,” “wrong version,” or “needs review.” If every input receives a polished citation, the system may be hiding uncertainty. Preserve failure states in the research record and show the writer what needs attention.

Check a known-good reference and a deliberately broken reference when evaluating a tool. A system that accepts both has not demonstrated useful validation. Keep the test focused on the claimed capability: a citation-identity test cannot establish substantive legal analysis.

For automated drafting, require a source packet for every real authority and a visible label for fictional examples. If a generated citation cannot be independently located, remove it from the authority list until it is resolved. Do not replace it with a plausible-looking reporter number.

15.5 Preserve provenance through transformations

When converting CSV or XML into JSON, retain the source URL, snapshot or publication date, retrieval date, raw file, and checksum. Document any normalization. Converting null and empty text to the same value may be harmless for a display but unacceptable for an analysis of missing data.

Keep source text separate from editorial explanations. This allows an editor to see which statements came from the issuing institution, which metadata came from a provider, and which instructions are Citation Code's recommendations. It also makes a future correction easier: the team can identify affected examples without reconstructing the entire research process.

Sources and convention notes

CourtListener bulk-data documentation; CourtListener case-law API documentation; GPO bulk-data repository. Counts describe the archived research files, not an independent audit of the providers' complete collections.

16. Finish and Maintain the Document

16.1 Run the final review in layers

First review the propositions and their support. Then review source identity and locators. Then review short forms and cross-references. Finally review typography, tables, and the exported document. This sequence avoids spending all the available time polishing a citation whose source does not support the claim.

Use the requirements sheet from chapter 2. Confirm that the final document still fits the required document type and record system. Changes late in drafting can affect length, attachments, tables, and other formal requirements.

Review layer	Question
Support	Does the source support the exact sentence now written?
Identity	Are name, court, publication, number, and date correct?
Location	Does the citation reach the actual passage in the final source version?
Status	Have relevant permission, history, and temporal questions been resolved?
Navigation	Do short forms, note references, and internal links point to the right item?
Presentation	Does the document meet the receiving instructions?
Export	Do the final PDF, attachments, and tables preserve the intended content?

16.2 Rebuild the table of authorities

A table of authorities is a navigation device for the filed document. Its page references should identify where an authority is cited in that document, not pages within the authority. Normalize full and short forms so one source does not appear under several accidental names.

Court requirement — Supreme Court documents. Rule 34.2 specifies when a table of contents and table of cited authorities are required. It also directs the table to list each page on which an authority appears rather than using “passim,” with ranges available when the authority appears on every page in the range. Read the thresholds and exceptions in the rule for the actual document.

Automatic generation reduces clerical work but still needs inspection. Check duplicate entries, missing authorities, incorrect categories, and page references after the final pagination is fixed. A table generated before a major edit is only an intermediate artifact.

16.3 Inspect the final exported file

Open the exact PDF intended for submission. Follow representative internal and external links. Inspect footnotes, long citations, page breaks, symbols, and attachments. Search for unresolved placeholders and editorial comments. Confirm that text remains selectable and readable where the submission requirements call for searchable text.

Check a quotation at a page boundary and a citation inside a table. These are common places for layout defects. If the file has been redacted, inspect the redacted copy and ensure its locators still match the brief. A successful export command does not prove the exported document is correct.

16.4 Record the final review's scope

Keep a short completion note stating which artifact was reviewed, when, by whom, and for what. If the review checked citations and links but not current legal treatment, say so. If the document changed after review, identify which checks must be repeated.

Use a version identifier or checksum when practical so the note points to a particular file. Avoid a blanket “approved” label that outlives the file it originally described.

16.5 Maintain a reference after publication

For a practice manual, course handout, or published reference, maintain an errata process and an edition history. Distinguish a correction to an erroneous statement from an update prompted by a later rule change. Readers need to know which version they hold and which version a correction affects.

A durable reference also needs an honest coverage statement. If a jurisdiction has not been checked, do not make its presence in a court directory look like a reviewed local-practice chapter. If a tool verifies identity but not treatment, keep that distinction in the interface and documentation.

Sources and convention notes

Supreme Court rules, rule 34.2. The layered review and maintenance system are Citation Code editorial practices.

Quick Forms and Editorial Choices

These forms are compact reminders of the source information to preserve. Brackets are placeholders. Complete each form from an inspected source and apply the receiving authority's requirements. The table does not certify compatibility with every style system.

Source or task	Working form	Essential check
Reported opinion	<i>/Case/</i> , [volume] [reporter] [first page], [pinpoint] ([court/year])	Identify the correct opinion and court
Separate opinion	Full case reference ([author], concurring or dissenting)	Confirm authorship and role
Short case reference	<i>/Short name/</i> , [volume] [reporter] at [pinpoint]	Ensure the antecedent is unambiguous
Neutral citation	<i>/Case/</i> , [court-assigned identifier], [paragraph]	Use the issuing source's actual identifier
Slip opinion	<i>/Case/</i> , No. [docket], slip op. at [page] ([court/date])	Preserve the slip version and pagination
Constitution	[Jurisdiction] Const. art. [number], § [number], cl. [number]	Use the instrument's own divisions
Code provision	[Title] [Code] § [section] ([version])	Check applicability and later amendments
Session law	[Act], Pub. L. No. [number], § [section], [volume] Stat. [page] ([year])	Distinguish enactment from codification
Bill	[Bill], [Congress], § [section] ([version/date])	Verify chamber, Congress, and version
Regulation	[Title] C.F.R. § [section] ([edition or version])	Identify annual or electronic source
Federal Register	[Document], [volume] Fed. Reg. [page], [pinpoint] ([date])	Distinguish proposed, final, and other status
Court rule	[Rule system] [rule/subdivision]	Separate national and local rules
Agency decision	<i>/Proceeding/</i> , [identifier], at [locator] ([agency/date])	Confirm finality or other status
Docket document	[Title] [locator], [docket entry/attachment]	Identify the case when context does not
Transcript	[Witness/proceeding] [page:line range] ([date])	Use the actual transcript's coordinates
Record appendix	[Required record designation] [volume/page]	Recheck after final assembly

Source or task	Working form	Essential check
Book	[Author], <i>[Title]</i> [locator] ([edition/year])	Verify edition and author/editor role
Article	[Author], <i>[Title]</i> , [volume/publication] [first page], [pinpoint] ([date])	Distinguish final publication and preprint
Web document	[Author], [Title], [date], [stable URL]	Verify that the URL returns the actual item
Dataset	[Creator], [Dataset], [version/snapshot], [repository/identifier]	State the analytical unit and method
Recording	[Creator], [Title], at [timestamp] ([date/platform])	Preserve the exact recording version
Treaty	[Treaty], [identifier/date], art. [number]	Separate text from party-status evidence
International decision	<i>[Proceeding]</i> , [document type/identifier], para. [number]	Do not substitute a press release for a judgment

A compact house-style card

Use italic case names, readable source identifiers, and precise locators. Retain complete page-range endpoints in our examples. Keep short names distinctive. Use a direct explanatory sentence when a signal would conceal a qualification. Identify fictional examples. Record source versions. Prefer a stable source identifier plus a useful link over a link alone. Apply the receiving instructions whenever they prescribe a different presentation.

Ten questions before submission

1. Can the reader identify the source without guessing?
2. Does the locator reach the passage actually used?
3. Did I read that passage in context?
4. Does it support the sentence as finally edited?
5. Have I identified a separate opinion, allegation, proposal, or other limitation?
6. Is the cited version the one relevant to the task?
7. Have I resolved applicable citation-permission and treatment questions?
8. Do shortened forms and note references remain unambiguous after editing?
9. Does the final file satisfy the receiving requirements?
10. Can another reviewer reproduce the important checks from the source packet?

Glossary and Subject Finder

Term	Working meaning	Read
Antecedent	Earlier reference that gives a short form its identity	Chapter 8
Citation cluster	Provider grouping of related opinion records and metadata	Chapter 15
Citation permission	Whether a source may be cited in the receiving setting	Chapter 2
Codification	Organization of legal provisions in a code	Chapter 9
Court requirement	Instruction attributable to a specified applicable rule	Chapter 2
Docket entry	An item in a case's procedural record	Chapter 11
Edition	A particular published version of a work	Chapter 12
Effective date	Date on which a provision begins to operate, subject to its terms	Chapters 9 and 10
First page	Beginning page of a reported source	Chapter 5
House practice	Citation Code's editorial choice where no controlling instruction displaces it	Using this reference
Neutral citation	Court-assigned decision identifier independent of a reporter's volume/page	Chapter 4
Parallel citation	Another publication identifier for the same decision	Chapter 4
Pinpoint	Locator for the particular passage used	Chapter 5
Precedential weight	The authority a decision carries in the relevant setting	Chapter 2
Proposition	Claim for which the writer supplies support	Chapter 1
Provenance	Record of where material came from and how it was transformed	Chapter 15

Term	Working meaning	Read
Record citation	Reference to litigation evidence or procedural material	Chapter 11
Retrieval date	Date on which the researcher obtained the material	Chapter 3
Separate opinion	A concurrence, dissent, or other opinion distinct from the lead opinion	Chapter 4
Short form	Abbreviated reference dependent on a clear full identification	Chapter 8
Signal	Introductory expression describing the source's relationship to a proposition	Chapter 6
Slip opinion	Issued opinion in a preliminary publication form	Chapter 4
Snapshot	Dataset or publication copy preserved at a stated time	Chapter 15
Source packet	Saved source, metadata, link, and proposition notes	Chapter 3
Table of authorities	Navigation table locating cited authorities within the submitted document	Chapter 16

Work by stage: first-year writing, journal work, moot court, clinics, and practice teams — chapter 14. **Quote review:** alterations, emphasis, block layout, and OCR — chapter 7.

Unfamiliar materials: treaties, international decisions, foreign judgments, translations, and Tribal sources — chapter 13. **Final review:** support, locators, short forms, tables, export, and errata — chapter 16.

Source Register

Research baseline: October 8, 2026. The links identify the source institutions and files used for this draft. A downloaded file is not a certification of current legal applicability. Chapter notes identify the particular provisions discussed.

- Supreme Court rules effective March 16, 2026.
- FRAP and Ninth Circuit rules effective June 1, 2026.
- GPO United States Code publication guide.
- GPO CFR publication guide.
- GPO public and private laws guide.
- GPO congressional bills guide.
- GPO Federal Register guide.
- GPO authentication.
- GPO bulk collections.
- California rule 8.1115.
- California rule 8.204.
- 28 USC 1331; 2024 compilation.
- 5 USC 552; 2024 compilation.
- UN Charter.
- ICJ decisions collection.
- UK National Archives judgments collection.
- National Archives Constitution transcription, inspected through web research.
- CourtListener case-law data and bulk-data documentation.
- GPO eCFR bulk collection, selected title snapshots preserved with dates and checksums.

The accompanying private research packet retains acquisition manifests, original snapshots, selected MCP records, conversion scripts, and editorial limitations. Source institutions retain their identities. Citation Code supplies this manuscript's original explanatory prose, organization, fictional examples, and editorial recommendations.