

The Writing Center

DLA: CA Case Citations: The Yellow Book Cases



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Student Name:

Important Note

To get completion credit for this DLA, make sure you complete all the required activities. If you'd like help while working on a specific DLA, you can meet with a specialist at the Writing Center. Keep in mind that you might need to schedule a second appointment to review your work, check your understanding, and get your completion credit. You can only review **ONE** DLA per appointment. (Check the last section of this DLA for information on making your appointment and receiving completion credit for your work).

Learning Outcomes

This activity takes students through an easy-to-follow, step-by-step process in which students learn how to cite California cases following the Yellow Book format.

Activities (approximately 1 hour)

Read the information, complete the activities that follow, and be prepared to discuss your answers when you meet with a tutor.

Understanding California Case Citation

Now that you understand how to integrate a reference to your legal sources, you must learn the exact format for your legal references. The California state court system follows the California Style Manual, better known as the "Yellow Book." This book gives very specific rules on how to cite various legal sources, including California cases.

California Courts

There are three levels of courts in California

1. **California Supreme Court:** This is the state's highest court, and when possible, you should use cases from this court because it has the highest level of authority on California law.
 - Example: *Morehart v. County of Santa Barbara* (1994) 7 Cal.4th 725 [29 Cal.Rptr.2d 804, 872 P.2d 143].
2. **California Court of Appeals:** These are the intermediate level courts in California. The state is divided into six districts. You can use any of these published case opinions (subject to Shepard's verification) but try to use cases from your client's appellate district (in Los Angeles County, the Second District).
 - Example: *People v. Roberts* (1994) 24 Cal.App.4th 1462 [29 Cal.Rptr.2d 771].
3. **California trial courts:** According to the California Rules of Court, Rule 8.1115, unpublished court opinions are not to be cited, and since trial court opinions are not published, they must not be cited. Refer to your PLGL 31 professor for details on this rule.

Supreme Court of California

Let's start with the rules for citing a case from the Supreme Court of California. The deciding court will be indicated near the top of the case, under the party names.

Case names: According to the Yellow Book, case names are italicized, whether you're citing the entire case name (*Marvin v. Marvin*) or just referring to the case by its short name (*Marvin*). However, if you're just referring to the parties, Mr. Marvin or Mrs. Marvin, you do not italicize their names. Further, we only use last names in the case title (not *Michelle Marvin v. Lee Marvin*). The case name is the only part of the citation that is italicized. Most cases follow the format Plaintiff v. Defendant, but there are exceptions, such as *In re Menna* (meaning in regards to Menna's case or Menna's petition).

- Example: *Marvin v. Marvin*

Year of decision: The year the case was decided comes next. It will be indicated near the top of the case. It goes into parenthesis and is not italicized.

- Example: *Marvin v. Marvin* (1976)

Citation to official reporter: Cases from the Supreme Court of California are published in three different sets of books. You can use whichever set is most convenient for you. However, when you cite the case you must list the official reporter first, even if you are not using it. The official reporter for Supreme Court of California decisions is California Reports, abbreviated Cal., followed by the series number: Cal., Cal.2d, Cal.3d, Cal.4th. Notice that there is no space between the period and the number, and 2d is not written 2nd, nor is 3d written 3rd. All case citations follow this format: volume # reporter abbreviation page #.

- Example: *Marvin v. Marvin* (1976) 18 Cal.3d 660

This indicates that the case *Marvin v. Marvin*, published in 1976, starts on page 660 of volume 18 of the California Reports, third series. (Series are not editions. This will be explained in PLGL 31.)

Citation to unofficial reporters: Because the cases can be found in three different sets of books, the Yellow Book tells us that it's good practice to give parallel citations to the other reporters that also contain the case. This is partly because we don't know which set of books opposing counsel has in his/her office. The judges usually have the official reporters, Westlaw, or Lexis. Therefore, you must give references to all three sets of books that contain the case.

The unofficial reporters are California Reporter and Pacific Reporter. California Reporter is abbreviated Cal.Rptr. followed by its series: Cal.Rptr., Cal.Rptr.2d, Cal.Rptr.3d. Again, there are no spaces between the words or between the words and the series number. Pacific Reporter is abbreviated P. followed by its series: P., P.2d. Again, no spaces are used. The unofficial reporters are put in brackets and are listed alphabetically (Cal.Rptr. before P.).

- Example: *Marvin v. Marvin* (1976) 18 Cal.3d 660 [134 Cal.Rptr. 815, 557 P.2d 106].

California Courts of Appeal

Next let's look at cases from the California Courts of Appeal. The deciding court will be indicated near the top of the case, under the party names.

Case names: This follows the same format as for Supreme Court of California cases: the case name is italicized, and most cases follow the Plaintiff v. Defendant format. First names are not included.

- Example: *People v. Sanchez*

Year of decision: The year the case was decided comes next and is enclosed in parenthesis. It can be found near the top of the case, near the case name.

- Example: *People v. Sanchez* (1994)

Citation to official reporter: Cases from the California Courts of Appeal are published in two different sets of books. You can use whichever set is most convenient for you. However, when you cite the case you must list the official reporter first, even if you are not using it. The official reporter for California Courts of Appeal decisions is California Appellate Reports, abbreviated Cal.App., followed by the series number: Cal.App., Cal.App.2d, Cal.App.3d, Cal.App.4th. Notice that there is no space between the period and the number, and 2d is not written 2nd, nor is 3d written 3rd. All case citations follow this format: volume # reporter abbreviation page #.

- Example: People v. Sanchez (1994) 23 Cal.App.4th 1680

Citation to unofficial reporter: Because the cases can be found in two different sets of books, the Yellow Book tells us that it's good practice to give parallel citations to the other reporter that also contains the case. This is partly because we don't know which set of books opposing counsel has in his/her office. Judges usually have the official reporters, Westlaw, or Lexis. Therefore, you must give references to both sets of books that contain the case.

The unofficial reporter is California Reporter, which contains cases from both the Supreme Court of California and the California Courts of Appeal. California Reporter is abbreviated Cal.Rptr. followed by its series: Cal.Rptr., Cal.Rptr.2d, Cal.Rptr.3d. Again, there are no spaces between the words or between the words and the series number. The unofficial reporter cite is put in brackets.

- Example: People v. Sanchez (1994) 23 Cal.App.4th 1680 [29 Cal.Rptr.2d 367].

Note about the period: Some professors require students to include a period at the end of each citation as a reminder to always put the citation at the end of the sentence. A citation placed in the middle of a sentence is very distracting to your reader, sometimes forcing her to reread the entire sentence in order to understand it.

Activities

Check off each box once you have completed the activities below.

1. Write a Citation for In re Glass

Go to the Mt. SAC Library website at <http://www.mtsac.edu/library> and access the database "Westlaw." Click on the State Materials tab, then on "California" and then on "All California State Cases." In the search box type "In re Glass" and click search. The top case should be In re Glass, decided by a California case in 2014. Click on it. Scroll down past the word "Opinion." Choose a passage from the text to directly quote and write it in the space provided. Include a signal phrase to introduce your quote.

Which court decided this case?

Using the citation format for that court, specified above, give a complete Yellow Book citation, including parallel citations, for this case.

□ 2. Write a Citation for Reagan Roofing v. Superior Court

Close In re Glass. This time, in the Westlaw search box, type “Regan Roofing v. Superior Court” 1994, including the quotation marks. Click on it. Which court decided this case?

Choose a passage from the text to directly quote and write it in the space provided. Include a signal phrase to introduce your quote.

Using the citation format for that court, specified above, give a complete Yellow Book citation, including parallel citations, for this case.

□ 3. Review the DLA/Receive Completion Credit

1. Go to [EAB Navigate](#) and make an appointment (online or in-person).
2. Attend your session and be prepared to explain your understanding of the information you’ve learned in the DLA. Consider the main concept you learned and how you might use this in your future assignments/classes.
3. If your professor asks you to provide proof, you can review the “appointment summary report” through EAB Navigate (app or desktop). You will find all Writing Center appointments under “appointment summary reports” (app or desktop). Look for the summary report for your DLA appointment. This is where your writing specialist will indicate the title of your DLA and state whether it is “completed” or “not completed.” If it is marked as “not completed,” book a follow up appointment to complete.

Note: Appointment summary reports are also sent weekly to your instructor on record. If there is an issue, please contact us at writingcenter@mtsac.edu or (909) 274-5325.

If you are an individual with a disability and need a greater level of accessibility for any document in The Writing Center or on The Writing Center’s website, please contact the Mt. SAC Accessible Resource Centers for Students, access@mtsac.edu, (909) 274-4290.

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