Judicial opinions are published in multi-volume sets called court reports. There are separate court reports for the appellate cases of nearly every state, and the opinions published in them are also duplicated in regional reporters for the various areas of the country. There are also federal reports for the United States Supreme Court, the lower federal courts, and certain specialty courts such as bankruptcy and military justice. State court opinions consist of appellate decisions only, while the federal courts also report cases from the trial level. In addition to the published opinions, there are many decisions which are not published in court reports. Publishing each and every opinion decided by the state and federal courts, regardless of whether any new legal theories or issues are addressed, would not only be repetitious, but also prohibitive because of cost and space constraints.

The names of the federal courts, their reports and abbreviations are:

United States Supreme Court: United States Reports (U.S.)
Supreme Court Reporter (S. Ct.)
United States Supreme Court Reports, Lawyers' Edition (L.Ed., L. Ed. 2d)

United States Circuit Courts of Appeal: Federal Reporter (F., F.2d, F.3d)


Regional reporters and their abbreviations are:

Atlantic Reporter (A., A.2d)
California Reporter* (Cal. Rptr., Cal. Rptr. 2d, Cal. Rptr. 3d)
New York Supplement* (N.Y., N.Y.2d, N.Y.S.2d)
North Eastern Reporter (N.E., N.E.2d)
North Western Reporter (N.W., N.W.2d)
Pacific Reporter (P., P.2d, P.3d)
South Eastern Reporter (S.E., S.E.2d)
Southern Reporter (So., So. 2d)
South Western Reporter (S.W., S.W.2d, S.W.3d)

The format of a case citation is: Name of case/parties, reporter volume, name of reporter, beginning page number of case, and year the opinion was decided. Where opinions appear in both a regional reporter and a state reporter, the case citation will contain "parallel cites" to both. The following are examples of cases from the United States Supreme Court, federal appellate and trial courts, and Oregon state court, respectively. Parallel citations are shown where applicable.
You will find the opinion in the volume and at the page number shown for the report series indicated in the citation. It is possible to determine what court rendered the opinion by reference to the case citation. For instance, whether a case is from the United States Supreme Court or one of the lower federal courts determines in which federal reporter the opinion is published. Additionally, the parenthetical information indicates which federal court rendered the opinion. For state cases, the abbreviations of the state reports in the cite typically indicate the state court of origin.

In addition to the federal and specialty reports, the Law Library contains all the regional reporters, as well as California Reporter, New York Supplement, and Oregon Reports. The various United States Supreme Court reporters, as well as the Federal Reporter, and Federal Supplement, are found on the 2nd floor of the Law Library. The Pacific Reporter and the Oregon Reports are found both on the 2nd and 4th floors of the Law Library. The other regional reporters are found on the 4th floor only. Some of the earlier series of reporters and some earlier volumes within later series have been relocated to Law Storage and will be retrieved upon request.

On the 2nd floor the federal reporters are shelved in ranges 1 through 5; the Pacific Reporter is located in range 6, while the Oregon Reports are found in range 10.

On the 4th floor the regional reporters, and the New York Supplement and California Reporter, are located in ranges 8 through 14; the Oregon Reports are found in range 37.

*The number of lower court cases for California and New York are so numerous that separate reporters have been created for them.

This publication is available in accessible formats upon request to Law Library Reference, 346-1654.