

Researching Statutes

Legal Research Center Video Series



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An Introduction to Statutes

- Laws enacted by a legislature are called statutes.
- Statutes are first published in a collection of “session laws”—all the laws passed during a particular legislative session.
 - Federal: Statutes at Large
 - California: California Statutes and Amendments to the Code
- Then statutes are organized by subject and published as “codes.”
 - Federal: United States Code (U.S.C.)
 - California: 29 separate subject area codes
- You will almost always want to do your research in the statutory codes rather than the session laws.

Statutory Codes:

Unannotated vs. Annotated

- Federal and state governments usually publish a version of their statutory codes—this is the “official” version and contains only the text of the statutes (no annotations).
 - Note that California is one of a handful of states that do not publish an official version of their codes.
- Commercial publishers publish annotated versions of a code. These contain the same statutory text as the official version, but they add additional information to help researchers (annotations).

What are Annotations?

- History of the statute
- Secondary sources that discuss the statute and explain how the statute is interpreted and applied
- Case law summaries of cases that have interpreted or applied your statute (an excellent jumpstart on your case law research)

Federal & California Legislative Codes

Federal

- Official code: United States Code—U.S.C.
- Annotated codes:
 - U.S. Code Annotated—U.S.C.A. (West)
 - U.S. Code Service—U.S.C.S. (Lexis)

California

- Annotated codes:
 - West's California Codes (West)
 - Deering's California Codes (Lexis)

Note about West & Lexis:

1. Annotations are different— check both for most thorough coverage
2. Often have exclusive licenses with other publishers—their annotations will point you to affiliated content
 - Only the West products will refer to West Digest Topic & Key Numbers


Statutory Code Citation: Examples

- 29 U.S.C. § 1823
- Cal. Corp. Code § 309
- Nev. Rev. Stat. § 17.150
- Conn. Gen. Stat § 52-570d

Note:

- Named or numbered “title”
+
- Some combination of numbered chapters, sections, and subsections

Researching in Print: Check the Bluebook

THE BLUEBOOK® Hi Julianne 

RULES


TABLES

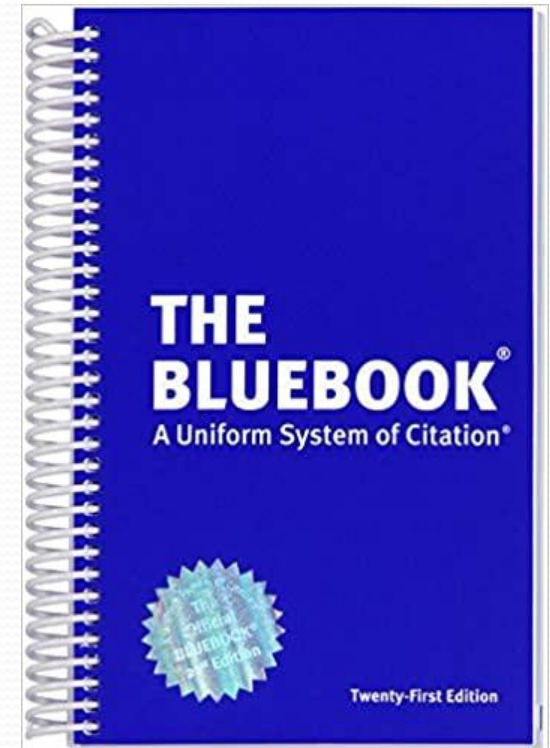
- T1.2 Federal Administrativ...
- ↓ T1.3 States and the Distri...
 - Alabama (Ala.)
 - Alaska (Alaska)
 - Arizona (Ariz.)
 - Arkansas (Ark.)
 - California (Cal.)**
 - Colorado (Colo.)
 - Connecticut (Conn.)
 - Delaware (Del.)
 - District of Columbia (D.C.)

Tables – United States Jurisdictions – States and the District of Columbia – California (Cal.)

Statutory compilations: Cite to either the West or the Deering subject-matter code, if therein.

▶ West's Annotated California Codes	CAL. <SUBJECT> CODE § x (West <year>)
▶ Deering's California Codes, Annotated (LexisNexis)	CAL. <SUBJECT> CODE § x (Deering <year>)
▶ Agricultural (renamed "Food and Agricultural" in 1972)	AGRIC.
▶ Business and Professions	BUS. & PROF.
▶ Civil	CIV.
▶ Civil Procedure	CIV. PROC.

[Feedback](#) 



Finding a Code Section: When You Know the Code Section

- Example: 29 U.S.C. § 1823
 - Westlaw
 - Lexis

Finding a Code Section:

When You Know the Name of the Act

Examples:

- “Sarbanes-Oxley Act”
- “Patriot Act”
- “TARP”
- “Dodd-Frank”

Popular Name Table—at the end of:

- USC, USCA, USCS
- West’s California & Deering’s California
- Also on Westlaw and Lexis

Finding a Code Section: When You Just Know the Topic

- Example: California programs that provide funding to retrofit schoolbuses for clean fuel
 - Search terms:
 - California
 - Clean fuel; emissions; clean energy
 - Bus; schoolbus; school transportation

Review

- Introduction to statutes—how they are created & published
- Annotations—contents and why they're valuable
- Federal & California code sets
- Bluebook Table 1
- Pulling a code section from a citation
- Navigating around the statutory text and annotations, especially the case law summaries
- Using the Popular Name Table
- Searching for a code section on a specific topic, including a brief introduction to Boolean searching—we'll cover this more fully later in the semester

LRC Reference Desk

- **lrcrefer@sandiego.edu**
- **619.260.4612**
- **Chat: <https://www.sandiego.edu/law/library/>**

- **Other videos in this series:**
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