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How to Read Legal Citations

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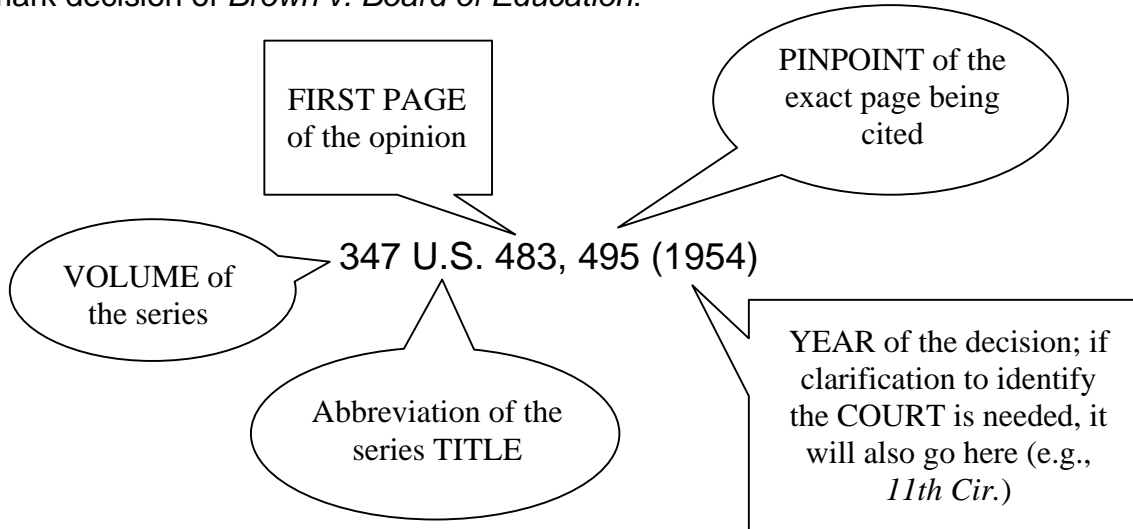
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HOW TO READ LEGAL CITATIONS

Most **case** citations follow a standard format, shown here by the citation to the landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education*:

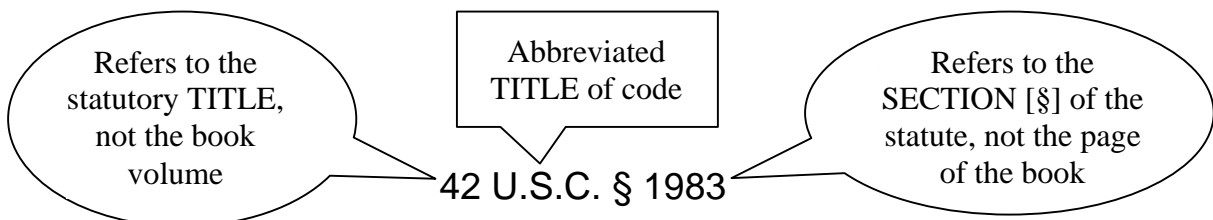


On page 495 the reader finds the U.S. Supreme Court's famous conclusion that "Separate education facilities are inherently unequal."

Decisions are often reported in more than one set of books. A case name might therefore be followed by several cites, called **parallel cites**. The text is identical, although the pagination will be different. Parallel cites to the *Brown* decision look like:

347 U.S. 483, 74 S.Ct. 686, 98 L.Ed. 873, 38 A.L.R.2d 1180 (1954)

Citations to **statutes** look very similar, although the numbers refer to different things:



Some statute citations look different, however. Cites to the Georgia Code follow this style:

OCGA 18-4-22

The title abbreviation is followed by TITLE-CHAPTER-SECTION numbers.

For more information about legal citation, see *Introduction to Basic Legal Citation* (LII 2003 ed.) by Peter W. Martin, at <http://www.law.cornell.edu/citation/>