Using the Canadian Guide to Uniform Legal Citation

The Canadian Guide to Uniform Legal Citation (McGill Guide) is the style guide most commonly used by Canadian courts, law journals, universities and legal practitioners.

All information contained in this hand-out is based on the Canadian Guide to Uniform Legal Citation, 7th ed (Toronto: Carswell, 2010). The Guide is also known as the McGill Guide because it is produced by the editors of the McGill Law Journal. Note that this hand-out highlights only the most commonly used information from the McGill Guide. If you are in doubt about how to cite a particular item or if you wish to cite an item not addressed in this hand-out, please consult the McGill Guide directly. A copy of the McGill Guide is available at the Research Help Desk on the Main floor of the Library (KE259.C35 2010). Still in doubt? Consult with your instructor.

LEGAL CITATION – GENERAL RULES

It is important to provide proper citation to sources used when writing academic papers. Most academic papers in law and legal studies require the use of numbered footnotes or endnotes for citation purposes. Footnotes are listed at the bottom of each page, while endnotes appear at the end of the paper.

The first time you cite a work in your paper you should provide a complete citation for the work in a footnote or endnote. Subsequent citations may use ibid or supra. (See McGill Guide at E-11 to E-12)

Ibid: Abbreviation for Latin word ibidem meaning “in the same place.” Use ibid when referring to the same source as in the immediately preceding reference. Ibid may be used after a supra, or even after another ibid.

2. Ibid at para 26.

Supra: Latin word meaning “above.” Use supra when referring to a source for which you have already provided a full citation (but not the immediately preceding citation).

2. Ibid at para 26.
5. Anand, supra note 3 at 313.

Short forms: In notes 4 and 5 of the example above, the term supra is preceded by a short form for the source – either a short form of the case name (note 4) or a short form of the article using the author’s last name (note 5). It is advisable to provide a short form for a source if you will be referencing the source multiple times, particularly if the title of the source is longer than three words. Place the short form for the source in brackets in the first citation for the source as in note 1 in the example above.

Pinpoint citation: Citations are necessary to properly credit another source or to identify evidence you are relying on. In most cases, it is not sufficient to simply identify the source as a whole. Rather, it is often necessary to identify the precise page or paragraph number that you are relying on from the source. This is called a pinpoint citation. The format for indicating a pinpoint paragraph reference is demonstrated in notes 1, 2, and 4 in the example above. The format for indicating a pinpoint page reference is demonstrated in note 5 in the example above. Note that “page” or “p.” are not included prior to the pinpoint page reference, although “para” is used prior to a pinpoint paragraph reference.

Avoiding repetition: It is not necessary to repeat information provided in the text in the citation. For example, if the name of the case being cited is provided in the text of your paper, do not repeat the name in the citation.
CITING LEGISLATION

For in-depth instructions on citing legislation see chapter 2 of the McGill Guide.

**Bills:** Laws are first presented for consideration by the legislature in the form of Bills. These Bills must be debated and finally approved by the legislature and receive royal assent before becoming enforceable statutes.

**Federal Bills:**

**Federal Bills Format:**
Bill Number, Title, Session, Legislature, Year, Clause Pinpoint.

**Provincial Bills:**

**Provincial Bills Format:**
Bill Number, Title, Session, Legislature, Provincial Jurisdiction, Year, Clause Pinpoint.

**Statutes:** Once a bill has received the necessary legislative approval and royal assent it becomes a statute. Statutes are first collected in **Annual Volumes**. Periodically, all the statutes in a particular jurisdiction (including all amendments) are collected in a collection of statutes known as the **Revised Statutes**.

**Annual Volume:**
Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, SC 2000, c 5.

**Revised Statutes:**
Criminal Code, RSC 1985, c C-46, s 319.

**Statutes Format:**
Title, Statute Volume and Jurisdiction Year, (session or supplement), Chapter, Section Pinpoint.

**Electronic versions:** Federal and provincial governments now publish their statutes electronically on government websites. Be sure to check whether the electronic or the paper version of the statutes are the official versions.

CITING JURISPRUDENCE

For in-depth instructions on citing jurisprudence, see chapter 3 of the McGill Guide.


**Case Format:**
Style of Cause (Year of Decision)
Neutral Citation, [Year of Reporter] Volume, reporter (Series if any) Page (Court if required), Pinpoint Citation, Parallel Citation [short form].

**Neutral Citations:** Most courts now publish their decisions with a neutral citation that indicates the year of the decision, the court and a decision number. Where a neutral citation is available, it should be included right after the name of the case (style of cause). In the example above, “2001 SCC 2” is the neutral citation for the Supreme Court of Canada’s decision in the Sharpe case.

**Case Reporters:** Judicial decisions are also collected and published in edited Case Reports. Case Reports may be organized according to yearly volumes or according to series. For example, the Supreme Court Reports (SCR) are organized according to yearly volumes; the Dominion Law Reports (DLR) are organized according to series. The format for citing these two types of Case Reports is different as demonstrated above – note in particular the use of brackets [ ] vs parentheses ( ) depending on the type of Case Report.

CITING JOURNAL ARTICLES

When citing journal articles, include the name of the author as it appears on the front page of the article. In addition, use the abbreviation for the name of the law journal in which the article is published (use the full title for journal names from other disciplines). For a list of law journal title abbreviations, please see Appendix D in the McGill Guide.

**From a printed journal:**
**Article with two to three authors:**

**Full-text article from a database:**
If an article is retrieved from one of the full text legal databases you can include the database abbreviation at the end of your citation. Commonly used databases include Quicklaw (QL), Westlaw Canada (WL Can), LexisNexis (Lexis):


**Format:**
Author (as name appears on front page), “Title of Article” (Year) Volume Number abbreviated Journal Title First Page Number (Electronic Service if Applicable).

**CITING BOOKS**

**Book with a single author:**

**Format:**
Author (as name appears on front page), *Title* (Place of publication: Publisher, Year).

**Book with three authors: authors are separated by a comma and the “&” symbol:**

**Book with more than three authors include only the first author’s name and “et al”**

**Article in an edited collection:**

**Format:**
Author of article (as name appears on front page), “Title of Article” in Editor (as name appears on title page) *Title of Book* (Place of publication: Publisher, Year).

**CITING NEWSPAPERS**


**Format:**
Author, “Title of Article”, *Newspaper* (Date) Page (Electronic Service / Source if Applicable).

**CITING GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS**

The category of government documents includes diverse sources ranging from legislative debates, reports from parliamentary committees and reports from other actors such as Officers of Parliament and Commissions of Inquiry. See chapter 4 of the *McGill Guide*.

**Debates**
*House of Commons Debates, 37th Parl, 1st Sess, No. 64 (17 May 2001) at 4175 (Hon Elinor Caplan).*

**Format:**
Jurisdiction, Legislature, *Title*, Legislative Session, Volume or Number (date) Pinpoint (speaker).

**Non-parliamentary Papers**

**Format:**
Jurisdiction, Issuing Body, *Title*, Volume (publication information).
CITING ONLINE MATERIALS

For materials found online, give proper citation for the type of source (e.g. government document) and then add “online: name of website <url>” as in the Privacy Commissioner example below.


BIBLIOGRAPHIES

A bibliography is a list of all the sources you have used to prepare your paper. In most cases, you will be expected to include a bibliography at the end of your paper in addition to your footnotes or endnotes. Your bibliography should present an alphabetical list of all sources you have cited in your paper.

You may wish to organize your bibliography according to categories of sources, e.g. jurisprudence, legislation and government documents, and secondary sources. For in-depth instructions on creating a bibliography, see pages E-3 to E-4 of the McGill Guide.

NEED MORE HELP?

Writing Tutorial Service
Location: Library, RM 411
Telephone: 613-520-2600 x1125
Web site: http://www.carleton.ca/wts/

Research Help Desk
Location: Main floor, Library
Telephone: 613-520-2735
Web site: www.library.carleton.ca