**Legal Citation Help Guide**

RRU Writing Centre

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# Legal Citation Help Guide

This short introduction to legal citations focuses on formatting citations and references to Canadian legal resources, especially for RRU students using the American Psychological Association’s *Publication Manual* (2020)to format their assignments. The APA *Publication Manual* (2020) requires that “legal materials are cited in the standard legal citation style used for legal references” because “legal references are usually already written in legal style and require few, if any, changes for an APA Style reference list entry” (APA, 2020, p. 355). Since the standard legal citation style in Canada is the *Canadian Guide to Uniform Legal Citation* (2023), following the Canadian citation system for Canadian legal resources will both “verify that your legal references (a) contain the information necessary for retrieval and (b) reflect the current status of legal authority” (2020, p. 356).

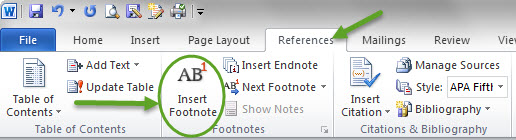
The McGill Law Journal created and published all editions of the *Canadian Guide to Uniform Legal Citation* (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-ix) and this longer title is often abbreviated to the *McGill Guide* (2023) as a result. The *McGill Guide* (2023) is currently in its 10th edition and contains seven overall sections on the format for references and citations to legal as well as non-legal or secondary materials. Since the *McGill Guide* (2023) rules do not apply to citations and references for all non-legal resources in student work formatted to the APA Style rules, this document focuses on the rules for citing and referencing legal resources in particular. In this way, the information contained in this guide therefore assumes a hybrid, complementary approach that involves meeting the requirements from both theAPA’s *Publication Manual* (2020) and the *McGill Guide* (2023) for non-legal and legal materials, respectively.

While this document addresses aspects of legal citation, especially as used in APA Style, this document itself is not a legal document. Accordingly, where possible, this document has been formatted to APA Style rules. This approximates the approach students will take at RRU, where APA Style formatting is followed for all citations and references throughout, in combination with *McGill Guide* (2023) formatting for citations and references to legal resources.

This document begins with a brief comparison of the *McGill Guide*’s (2023) and APA *Publication Manual*’s (2020) respective and complementary approaches to in-text citations. It then introduces the rules for citing legal resources in-text and provides several examples of legal citations. After these examples, this explanation continues with a section on formatting references for legal materials to *McGill Guide* (2023) rules. Finally, the guide concludes with example references for the common types of legal resources.

# Footnotes

The *McGill Guide* (2023) uses footnotes to cite resources in-text. In particular, instead of citing a legal resource within parentheses, superscripted numbers communicate a citation to a legal resource, like this.[[1]](#footnote-1) Each superscripted number within the text corresponds to “citation footnotes” at the bottom of the page in which the legal resource is cited (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-6). To insert a superscripted number and corresponding footnote, select the “Insert Footnote” option under “References” in Microsoft Word’s ribbon tabs, as shown below:



In the case of quoted information, the superscripted number follows the quotation itself, while the number follows paraphrased information either after the end punctuation in a sentence, or after a specific word to which the citation applies (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-6). This placement differs from the placement of an APA Style parenthetical in-text citation before sentence punctuation (see the previous sentence for an example). However, the principles behind both citation styles—to identify the source of quoted or paraphrased information in a text—is the same. In particular, in both guides, it is necessary to cite sources of paraphrased or quoted text, and to include the location of original text for each citation where relevant (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-6).

## Full Citations to Legislation or Jurisprudence (Case Law)

The organization of example citations and references corresponds to the two categories of legal resources: (a) legislation (such as statutes, bills, regulations, and municipal by-laws) or (b) jurisprudence (such as cases and decisions from courts, administrative bodies and tribunals). The information contained in a citation footnote to legislation includes the (a) name of a law, (b) abbreviated statute source, (c) the year indicating the specific volume from the statute source, (d) location of law in statute source, and (e) location of cited material in the law. For example, this footnote[[2]](#footnote-2) contains an example legal citation for the *Criminal Code* found in the Revised Statutes of Canada (RSC):

*Criminal Code,* RSC 1985, c C-46 s 293(1).

The above citation (from the second footnote) contains the following elements:

1. Name of law: *Criminal Code*
2. Abbreviated statute source (Revised Statutes of Canada): RSC
3. Year of the volume from the statute source (Revised Statutes of Canada): 1985
4. Location of law in statute source (Revised Statutes of Canada): c C-46
5. Pinpoint: s 293(1)

A citation footnote to jurisprudence typically includes the (a) name of a case, (b) year the decision was published, (c) the abbreviated name of a court or law report publishing the decision, (d) the decision number or page number the court or report assigns to the case, and (e) the location of cited material (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-10). The third footnote[[3]](#footnote-3) below is an example legal citation for a Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) case titled *Law Society of British Columbia v Trinity Western University*:

*Law Society of British Columbia v Trinity Western University,* 2018 SCC 32 at 297.

The above citation (from the third footnote) contains the following elements:

1. Name of case: *Law Society of British Columbia v Trinity Western University*
2. Year of decision: 2018
3. Abbreviated name of court (Supreme Court of Canada): SCC
4. Decision number: 32
5. Pinpoint: at 297

Detailed explanations and examples of references to legal resources are located in the sections on “[Legislation](#_Legislation)” and “[Jurisprudence (Case Law)](#_Jurisprudence_(Case_Law))” in this document. The next three subsections briefly introduce the formatting requirements for repeated citations and the location of cited text within a citation.

### Pinpoints

As demonstrated in the footnotes and examples so far, a legal citation may include the specific location of quoted or paraphrased information from the legislation—for the sake of the example, the second footnote in this document identifies section 293 of chapter 46 of the *Criminal Code* as the relevant location, and the third refers to page 297 of *Law Society of British Columbia v Trinity Western University*. The *McGill Guide* (2023) requires these “pinpoints” to refer to “a specific portion of the text”, such as the location of quoted or paraphrased material (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-13). Citations to specific locations of quoted or paraphrased material should include the chapter, section, article, and/or paragraph number of the cited material, where applicable (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-13). The abbreviations for each of these divisions is listed below and formatted **in bold font** in the examples:

* Page:no abbreviation (e.g., *R v Morgentaler*, [1988] 1 SCR 30 at **31**)
* Paragraph: “**para**” (e.g., *Victoria (City) v. Smith,* 2020 BCSC 1173 at **para 18**).
* Section: “**s**” (e.g., *Criminal Code,* 1985 RSC, c C-46 **s 293–298**).
* Article (e.g., a section of a statute): “**art**”(e.g., *Ibid,* **art 1457**).
* Footnote:“**n**” (e.g., *Xiao v. Fan,* 2020 BCSC 69 at para 29, **n 1**).

Similar to APA Style, a range of locations beginning in one page, section, article, or paragraph and ending in another can be connected with a dash “– ” as in “c C-46 ss 293–298” (the abbreviation “ss” stands for “section 293 to section 298” (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-13). On the other hand, a comma combines two separate locations in a single citation, as in “ss 293(1), 295(2)–(3)” (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-13).

### Ibid

To repeat an entire citation from a previous footnote in the next footnote, including the exact pinpoint included in the preceding footnote, use the italicized abbreviation “*ibid*” (standing for “ibidem” or “in the same place” in Latin) (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-12). For instance, the fourth footnote in this document repeats the citation from the third footnote listed below:

3 *Law Society of British Columbia v Trinity Western University,* 2018 SCC 32 at 297.

4 *Ibid.*

In this list, as in the footnotes at the end of the page, the fourth footnote repeats the entire citation from the third footnote, while, “*ibid*” combined with the words “at 303” in the fifth footnote repeats the citation from the fourth footnote with an additional pinpoint. In addition to the above list, the fourth footnote[[4]](#footnote-4) and fifth footnote[[5]](#footnote-5) below also display the correct formatting of these example citations (corresponding to the superscripted numbers in this sentence).

### Supra

To refer to the first citation of a source in any subsequent footnote, use the italicized word “*supra*” (meaning “above” in Latin) (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-12). For instance, rather than repeating the original, full citation from a previous footnote (*Criminal Code,* 1985 RSC, c C-46 ss 293(1)) the title *Criminal Code* combined with the word *supra* in the sixth footnote in the list and at the bottom of this page refers to the case introduced in the original citation:

2 *Criminal Code,* RSC 1985, c C-46 s 293(1).

6 *Criminal Code, supra* at 295(2)***–***(3).

See the sixth footnote[[6]](#footnote-6) below for an example citation that refers to the first citation of the *Criminal Code* in this document (in the second footnote), as displayed in the above list. Unlike the abbreviation *ibid* on its own, the word *supra* does not repeat a pinpoint on its own (e.g., “*Criminal Code*, *supra*” does not imply the reference to section 293(1) of the code contained in the original citation. Rather, to repeat a pinpoint from a previous footnote, either use “*ibid*” or “*supra*” combined with the full pinpoint, regardless of whether the previous footnotes also contained the same pinpoint (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-12).

# Reference Examples

In addition to citing legal resources within footnotes throughout the text, including a reference entry for each of the resources contained within the footnotes communicates the source of cited information within a document. For example, a single resource might be cited multiple times in text, and in addition to the footnotes for each of the citations, the reference list at the end of the document will include an entry for the legal resource mentioned in those footnotes.

Since the order of APA Style references at the end of a document is alphabetical, the first letter of each reference entry determines its placement relative to other entries in the list. For example, since “C” precedes “L” in the alphabet, the reference entry for the *Criminal Code* precedes the reference for the *Law Society of British Columbia v Trinity Western University* in an APA Style reference list containing both legal and non-legal resources*:*

*Criminal Code,* 1985 RSC, c C-46.

*Law Society of British Columbia v Trinity Western University,* 2018 SCC 32.

Likewise, each of these legal references follow entries to both legal and non-legal resources ordered alphabetically (e.g, entries beginning with “A” or “B”), as in the “[References](#_References)” of this document.

As a general rule, reference entries formatted to APA Style rules do not include the locations of material from the entry cited in-text; similarly, locations of cited text are only indicated by pinpoints in footnotes rather than reference entries. Since the examples in the following section show the formatting for reference entries rather than citations, these examples do not contain pinpoints. Instead, these examples show what information to include in individual reference entries for common types of legal resources.

## Legislation

A reference to legislation identifies the source and location of the law (e.g., the chapter in the volume of legislation organized by year) (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-25-26). The main elements of a reference to legislation are as follows:

*Name of Law*, Abbreviated statute source + Year, chapter number.

For instance, the Government of Canada’s 1985 version of the Revised Statutes of Canada (RSC) contains the *Criminal Code* in chapter C-46, as indicated in the example citation and reference for this law:

*Criminal Code,* RSC 1985, c C-46.

For an overview of all statute sources in Canada, please consult the University of Toronto's Bora Baskin Law Library's list of [*Current Canadian Legislation*](https://library.law.utoronto.ca/%3Cfront%3E/current-canadian-legislation). The following sections provide further references examples to laws at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels.

### Federal Statute

*Canada Elections Act*, SC 2000, c 9.

* Name of law: *Canada Elections Act*
* Statute source (Statutes of Canada): SC
* Year of corresponding volume from the statute source (SC): 2000
* Chapter number in the statute source (SC) from the year (2000): c 9

### Provincial Statute

*Sale of Goods Act*, RSBC 1996, c 410.

* Name of law: *Sale of Goods Act*
* Statute source (Revised Statutes of British Columbia): RSBC
* Year of corresponding volume from the statute source (RSBC): 1996
* Chapter number in the statute source (RSBC) from the year (1996): c 410

### Municipal By-Laws

References for municipal by-laws follow a slightly different format from other legislation, beginning with the city or municipality which enacted the by-law, rather than the title of the by-law, before concluding with the day, month, and year in parentheses (McGill Law Journal, 2018, E-33):

Municipality, by-law number, *By-law Title* (Day Month Year).

This format resembles a standard APA Style reference more closely than references for other legal resources, since the organization or institution (a “group author”) that created the resource begins the reference entry, as in:

City of Victoria, by-law No 11-044, *Animal Responsibility By-Law* (27 October 2011).

* Municipality: City of Victoria
* By-law number: by-law No 11-044
* Name of by-law: *Animal Responsibility By-Law*
* Date on which the by-law passed*:* 27 October 2011

### Bills

A bill is a proposed statute or amendment to a statute (Courthouse Libraries BC, 2002, What is a Bill? section). Note that the example below begins with the number of the bill before its full title, while the information following the title provides information about when the bill was introduced and passed (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-29):

Bill C-51, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Department of Justice Act and to make consequential amendments to another Act, 2nd Sess, 41st Parl, 2015 (as passed by the House of Commons 6 May 2015).

* Number of bill: Bill C-51
* Name of bill: An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Department of Justice Act and to make consequential amendments to another Act
* Specific session in the relevant legislature (Parliament): 2nd Sess, 41st Parl
* Year: 2015
* Additional information in parentheses (usually the specific reading or, in the case of a vote, passage of a bill): (as passed by the House of Commons 6 May 2015)

### Regulations

Regulations govern the processes used to apply and interpret federal and provincial statutes (Government of Canada, 2006, What are Regulations? section). For example, British Columbia’s *Provincial Sales Tax Regulations* details the specific rules and procedures that enforce the general requirements set out under the *Provincial Sales Tax Act*.[[7]](#footnote-7) A reference entry for a regulation will conclude with the identifying number of the regulation as well as the full year for regulations passed after the year 2000 (e.g., 2013), or the last two digits of years preceding the year 2000 (e.g., 96) (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-31):

*Provincial Sales Tax Regulations*,BC Reg 96/2013.

*Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations*, SOR/86-304.

* Name of regulations: *Provincial Sales Tax Regulations, Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations*
* Abbreviated name of source (British Columbia Regulations, Statutory Orders and Regulations): BC Reg, SOR
* Identifying number and year: 96/2013, 86-304

## Jurisprudence (Case Law)

As with legislation, the first element in a reference entry to a decision or case begins with its name (also known as a “style of cause”). If the case has been assigned a decision number, its name is followed by the year, the abbreviated name of the court, and the decision number for the case (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-44):

*Case Name*, Year + Abbreviated name of court + Decision Number.

In cases where the court does not assign a decision number to the case, a reference to the case may identify its location in an online database or a published volume of a law report instead (Queen’s University Library, n.d.; see also McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-48). The year of case corresponds to its publication within the relevant law report and is included in square brackets. When a law report is not attached to a specific court (e.g., as in this example citation[[8]](#footnote-8) to a British Columbia Supreme Court case from the *Western Weekly Review*), the abbreviated name of the court is included in parentheses (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-49):

*Case Name*, [Year] Volume of law report + Name of law report + Page number of case in law report (Abbreviated name of court).

### Cases With a Neutral Citation

### Roemer v Shafi, 2020 BCSC 1.

* Case name: *Roemer v Shafi*
* Year: 2020
* Abbreviated name of court (British Columbia Supreme Court): BCSC
* Decision number: 1

Since 1998, a growing [number of courts throughout Canada](https://lexum.com/ccc-ccr/neutr/index_en.html) have standardized the publication and organization of cases in a “neutral citation” system (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-43). When courts using this system assign decision numbers to cases, they consecutively number each case in a series progressing from the beginning to the end of every year and use this decision number for the case in conjunction with the title of the case, year of the decision, and the abbreviated name of the court to categorize and identify the case (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-43, Decision Number section). For instance, “2020 BCSC 1” in the above reference refers to the 1st decision of the British Columbia Supreme Court in 2020.

### Cases With a CanLII Citation

*Delgamuukw v British Columbia,* 1993 CanLII 4516 (BCCA)

* Case name: *Delgamuukw v British Columbia*
* Year: 1993
* CanLII serial number: 4516
* Abbreviated name of court (British Columbia Court of Appeal): BCCA

Prior to 1998, many courts did not use the neutral citation system. When a neutral citation is unavailable and the case is available through the Canadian Legal Information Institute (CanLII), the CanLII serial number takes the place of decision numbers found in neutral citations (McGill Guide, 2023, E-45). For instance, since the above case was not assigned a decision number by the British Columbia Court of Appeal in 1993, the CanLII identifier “CanLII 4516” helps readers locate the case in the Canadian Legal Information Institute’s online database. Finally, similar to a neutral citation, an abbreviated name of the court is also included in both the reference and citation to the case (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-49).

### Cases in a Law Report

*R v Morgentaler*, [1988] 1 SCR 30.

* Case name: *R v Morgentaler*
* Year: 1988
* Volume of law report: 1
* Abbreviated name of law report (Supreme Court Reports): SCR
* Page number of case in law report: 30

In addition to the recent neutral citation classification system used in many Canadian courts beginning from the late 90s, official law reports also classify and curate formal records of cases (Queen's University Library, n.d.). The names of these official law reports are still used to identify and reference notable cases from courts for which a CANLII identifier is unavailable and a neutral citation does not (or did not) exist at the time the law report published the case (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-37). In the above case, the shorthand abbreviation for “Regina” (or “Queen” in Latin): “*R*” refers to the federal government (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-40). Since *R v Morgentaler* appears on the 30th page of the first volume of the *Supreme Court Reports* in 1988, the above reference also includes the abbreviated name of the law report (SCR).

### Decisions by Administrative Bodies and Tribunals

Although the references to court cases help locate published decisions from courts and law reports, references to some legal decisions from other bodies do not use the same classification system when publishing their decisions online (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-53). Instead, the full date and full name of decisions from these bodies are included in the reference in the following format:

*Case Name* (date), decision or file number, online: full name of administrative body or tribunal, <link>.

For example, in the below case, the name of the decision is *The Commissioner of Competition v Facebook Inc* and since the decision was filed on May 19, 2020, the corresponding file number for the decision is CT-2020-004. Finally, the name of the tribunal and the URL to the decision complete the reference entry:

*The Commissioner of Competition v Facebook Inc* (19 May 2020),CT-2020-004, online: Competition Tribunal <https://decisions.ct-tc.gc.ca/ct-tc/cdo/en/item/471812/index.do>.

* Name of decision: *The Commissioner of Competition v Facebook Inc*
* Date of decision: (19 May 2020)
* Decision number:CT-2020-004
* Name of tribunal: online: Competition Tribunal
* URL: <https://decisions.ct-tc.gc.ca/ct-tc/cdo/en/item/471812/index.do>

# Conclusion

The previous two sections addressed the most common reference examples of two types of legal resources: legislation and cases. Within each of these categories, there are further examples of legal resources beyond those addressed in this guide, and many of these specific variations of the basic format introduced here are covered elsewhere, both online and throughout the *McGill Guide* (2023). For example, the law library at the University of British Columbia maintains a comprehensive [*Legal Citation Guide*](https://guides.library.ubc.ca/legalcitation) containing explanations and examples based on information in the *McGill Guide* (2023).

While this document serves as a starting point to learn more about citing and referencing Canadian legal materials, it is your responsibility to consult the *Canadian Guide to Uniform Legal Citation* (10th ed.) or other sources that can assist you for questions that are not covered in this short guide. For information on citing and referencing non-legislative materials, please consult the Writing Centre’s numerous resources on [*APA Style (7th ed.)*](https://libguides.royalroads.ca/apa7) and [*WriteAnswers*](https://writeanswers.royalroads.ca), and if you can’t find the information you need, contact us privately via the [*WriteAnswers*](file:///D:\Users\jfaerber.INSTRUCTIONAL.000\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\9PQKXRXD\WriteAnswers) contact form or [*Book an Appointment*](file:///D:\Users\jfaerber.INSTRUCTIONAL.000\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\9PQKXRXD\Book%20an%20Appointment) to discuss your questions in a 30-minute online appointment. If you are a student at another institution, please direct your questions to the appropriate person or unit at your university.

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*Criminal Code,* 1985 RSC, c C-46.

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*Law Society of British Columbia v Trinity Western University,* 2018 SCC 32

McGill Law Journal. (2018). *Canadian guide to uniform legal citation* (9th ed.). Thomson Reuters.

*Provincial Sales Tax Act,* SBC 2012 c 35.

Queen’s University Library. (n.d.). *Print reporters.* Legal Research Manual.

https://guides.library.queensu.ca/legal-research-manual/canadian-law-reports

1. This is an example of a *McGill Guide* (2023) citation footnote. In this case, the footnote number appears at the end of the sentence, after the punctuation, but occasionally footnotes like this may also be inserted after a cited word or directly after the ending quotation marks for quoted text (McGill Law Journal, 2023, E-6). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Criminal Code,* RSC 1985, c C-46 s 293(1). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Law Society of British Columbia v Trinity Western University,* 2018 SCC 32 at 297. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Ibid* at 303. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Criminal Code, supra* at 295(2)***–***(3). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Provincial Sales Tax Act* SBC 2012 c 35 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Delgamuukw v British Columbia*,[1991] 3 WWR 97 (BCSC). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)