

A very quick guide to referencing UK legal and government sources

This leaflet provides details of how to reference legislation, law reports, government publications and parliamentary inquiries. For full details, including formats for other countries, consult the full version of:

Pears, R. and Shields, G. (2025) *Cite them right: the essential referencing guide*. 13th edn. Palgrave Macmillan.

This is available:

- Print copies in libraries
- Online via <https://my.cumbria.ac.uk/Student-Life/Learning/Resources/referencing-and-avoiding-plagiarism/>



This guide is to legal referencing using **Harvard**. If you are a psychology student, you need to use **APA** and if a law student you need to use **OSCOLA**.



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Acts of Parliament (UK Statutes)

Since 1963 Acts should be referenced as below. Most are now available online, therefore you should include the website where you found the Act. You do not need to add the date separately in brackets as with most other sources. The chapter number refers to the place in the Statutes Book, not to a section of the Act.

Title of Act including year and chapter number. Available at: URL
(Accessed: date).

The Education Act 2011, c. 21. Available at:
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/21/contents> (Accessed: 20 June 2025).

In-text citation

Free early years provision must be provided by the local authority (*The Education Act 2011*).

To refer to a **section of an Act**, add the details in text only e.g.

As defined in section 10 (2) of the *Education Act 2011*....

For pre 1963 Acts, EU legislation and legislation from other countries see the full version of Cite them Right.

Law reports (cases)

These are reports of court cases. In addition to transcripts of cases, some are also reported in law report publications. The law profession uses a specific referencing style called OSCOLA so you will see case references online (eg www.baillii.org or via databases Lexis or Westlaw) and in textbooks in these formats:

R v. Turnbull and others [1976] 3 All ER 549

R v. Smith [2018] EWCA Crim 528

From 2002, cases have been given a 'neutral citation' making them easier to locate online. Therefore, you need to include details of the website.

Government Departmental Publications

You can usually find Government publications freely available on the internet. Give the URL and date accessed instead of the publisher details. Many publications are found via www.gov.uk but you should use the specific department as the author, if given.

Online

Name of author or department (Year) Title. Reference number (if available).
Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

Or if in print:

Name of author or department (Year) Title. Reference number (if available).
Place of publication: Publisher.

Department of Health and Social Care (2023) *NHS constitution for England*.
Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england> (Accessed: 20 June 2025).

In-text citation

The Department of Health and Social Care (2023) outlines...

Inquiries

Inquiries may be published by order of Parliament. If so, look out for the Parliamentary or Command number.

Author (Year) Title of inquiry (Parliamentary or Command Paper number).
Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

Or if in print:

Author (Year) Title of inquiry (Parliamentary or Command Paper number).
Publisher.

Laming, Lord (2003) *The Victoria Climbié inquiry* (HC 5730). Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/273183/5730.pdf (Accessed: 20 June 2025).

In-text citation

The Laming inquiry (2003) made recommendations...

You will need to convert the abbreviations used in these references into *Cite them right* format as demonstrated below. If you need to find the full name of abbreviations go to www.legalabbrevs.cardiff.ac.uk/

Pre 2002

'Name of case' (Year) Title of law report. Volume number, page numbers.

'R v. Turnbull and others' (1976) *All England Law Reports*, 3, pp. 549—560.

In-text citation

The case of 'R v. Turnbull and others' (1976) was particularly important...

Post 2002

'Name of parties involved in case' (Year) Court and case number, Database or website. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

'R v. Smith' (2018) Court of Appeal (Criminal Division), case 528. *Bailii*. Available at: <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Crim/2018/528.html> (Accessed: 20 June 2025).

In-text citation

The case of '*R v. Smith*' (2018)...

Access our referencing page via QR code:

Information correct at time of printing—August 2025

