The One-Minute Mentor

How Can I Find a Court Decision Using the Citation?

This guide will demonstrate how to search for a court decision (case law) using the citation.
First, Identify the Source of Publication Information in the Citation


The citation for a court decision will usually be similar to the above. It includes the parties to the case, the source of publication listing the volume, abbreviation of source and page number for the case (year of decision).
From the library homepage, select “Databases.”
Scroll down the alphabetical list of databases and select Lexis-Nexis Academic.
On the Lexis Nexis Academic home page, enter the source of publication information (from the example: 536 U.S. 639) in the Look up a Legal Case box, then click Go.
The result will be the full text of the court decision with that citation.
NOTE: Sometimes the citation will provide more than one source for the case with commas separating each source, like this: Zelman v. Simmons-Harris, 536 U.S. 639, 122 S. Ct. 2460, 153 L. Ed. 2d 604, 2002 U.S. LEXIS 4885 (2002).

Just try using the first source (here 536 U.S. 639) to find the case, it will usually work.
Thanks for using the One-Minute Mentor tutorial series!

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