

The Ohio Supreme Court Updates its Writing Manual

Article By:

Appellate & Supreme Court Group Squire Patton Boggs

Last week, the Ohio Supreme Court [published](#) a new and improved writing manual. The [Third Edition](#) is “a comprehensive guide . . . designed to improve the readability of opinions issued by, and briefs filed in,” Ohio’s courts. The unquestionable headline is that the new manual abandons the cumbersome [triple-parallel-citation](#) format of old in favor of citing just the Ohio online reporter, like so: *Smith v. Ohio State Univ.*, 2024-Ohio-764, ¶ 2.

An overview of notable changes includes:

- A new, streamlined way to cite the U.S. Supreme Court. *E.g.*, *Dutton v. Evans*, 400 U.S. 74, 77 (1970).
- New uniformity for citations to the Ohio courts of appeals (eliminating the case number and placing the court in parentheses). *E.g.*, *State v. Jones*, 2003-Ohio-5994, ¶ 6 (10th Dist.).
- Streamlined short cites for cases cited more than once. *E.g.*, *Smith* at ¶ 21.
- Abbreviated citations to State and the U.S. Constitutions. *E.g.*, Ohio Const., art. IV, § 2(B)(1)(g).
- The introduction of ellipses (. . .) instead of stars (* * *) for omissions in quotations.
- A qualified approval of the “cleaned up” parenthetical that this Blog has previously [investigated](#).

These and other changes bring Ohio to the “[forefront in modernizing legal writing](#),” said the revision committee’s Chair, Justice [R. Patrick DeWine](#). Justice [Melody J. Stewart](#) also served the committee, which Chief Justice [Sharon L. Kennedy](#) convened in 2023. Below, we select a few other updates to highlight, but practitioners might look closer at the 172 pages, in particular because the Court’s [Rules of Practice](#) commend the Writing Manual “for guidance on the style of documents filed with the Supreme Court.” S.Ct.Prac.R. 3.01.

THE SUPREME COURT *of* OHIO

Writing Manual

*A Guide to Citations, Style,
and Judicial-Opinion Writing*



Third Edition
Effective June 17, 2024



The Third Edition, recognizing that “parallel case citations are no longer necessary or helpful,” makes “changes intended to simplify and modernize citation forms.” The new manual confronts a tension familiar to all legal writers: Nearly every sentence in a legal argument requires citation, and yet “they are not very readable.” The new manual does yeoman’s work toward simplification, and

therefore readability, that practitioners and opinion readers (us included) will doubtless applaud.

The preferred citation for all cases is Ohio's unique "WebCite"—Ohio's very own [public-domain](#) reporter of decisions. To cite a case older than 2002, prefer the "official" Ohio State Reports to the "unofficial" North Eastern Reporter, and never cite both. When citing a court of appeals decision, whether published or unpublished, simply add a parenthetical identifying the appellate district. Retired are the days of parallel citing Ohio State Reports (Ohio St.3d), the Ohio WebCite (___-Ohio-___), and the North Eastern Reporter (N.E.2d). Suffice it now to cite just one.

Follow a similar rule for U.S. Supreme Court authority. Whereas the prior manual called for parallel citation to *three* reporters, no longer is there *ever* a need to reference the Lawyers' Edition (L.Ed.2d). Simply pin-cite the United States Reports when practicable, otherwise pin-cite the Supreme Court Reporter (S.Ct.). Note that the Supreme Court's Reporter of Decisions recently started to publish the U.S. Reports in preliminary print remarkably fast. So, for example, Justice Barrett's lovely opinion for the unanimous Court in [Lindke v. Freed](#)—decided just last month—is already available in a pre-published preliminary U.S. Report. See 601 U.S. 187, 190 (2024).

As for citing the U.S. courts of appeals, the new manual makes the smallest—albeit satisfying—change. Before, the proper citation did not place a space between the abbreviation "Cir." and the year of decision—now, that aesthetic space is encouraged. For its part, the Sixth Circuit, when citing the Ohio Supreme Court, has used the North Eastern Reporter—e.g., [In re Nat'l Prescription Opiate Litig.](#), 82 F.4th 455, 458 (6th Cir. 2023) (citing [Cincinnati v. Beretta U.S.A. Corp.](#), 768 N.E.2d 1136, 1142 (Ohio 2002)).

Second to parallel citations, the next most significant transition is toward abbreviated citations to constitutions.

So: Ohio Const., art. IV, § 2(B)(1)(g).

No longer: Ohio Constitution, Article IV, Section 2(B)(1)(g).

And: U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 3.

No longer: Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, Section 3.

This marks the *first time* the Court has invited the silcrow—better known as the "section symbol" (§). Also use the section symbol when citing secondary sources, just not for State or federal statutes and regulations.

So: R.C. 149.43.

Still not: R.C. § 149.43.

And: 42 U.S.C. 1983.

Still not: 42 U.S.C. § 1983.

The new guide maintains a handful of other idiosyncrasies from the past as well. Still, just one paragraph symbol (§) when citing multiple paragraphs. Still, no spaces when citing rules (e.g., Fed.R.Civ.P. 12(b)(6)). Still, a freestanding "emphasis added" parenthetical sentence between the quote and the cite, like so: "[Quote]." (Emphasis added.) [cite].

This latest guide replaces the manual's [Second Edition](#), introduced in 2013, which superseded The Manual of the Forms of Citation of 1985, as revised in 1992 and 2002. We know of some federal courts that offer substantive writing guides, including the Seventh Circuit's [Requirements and Suggestions for Typography](#) and the Eighth Circuit's [Pointers](#). It appears, however, that the Sixth

Circuit is [not among them](#). Though, we can boast Judge Kethledge's insightful primer on [effective brief writing](#).

	Before	Now
Ohio, 2002 and after	<i>Bonacorsi v. Wheeling & Lake Erie Ry. Co.</i> , 95 Ohio St.3d 314, 2002-Ohio-2220, 767 N.E.2d 707, ¶ 15.	<i>Bonacorsi v. Wheeling & Lake Erie Ry. Co.</i> , 2002-Ohio-2220, ¶ 15.
Ohio, before 2002	<i>O'Brien v. Egelhoff</i> , 9 Ohio St.3d 309, 311, 459 N.E.2d 886 (1984).	<i>O'Brien v. Egelhoff</i> , 9 Ohio St.3d 309, 311 (1984).
Ohio Ct. App., 2002 and after	<i>State v. Jones</i> , 10th Dist. Franklin No. 02AP-1390, 2003-Ohio-5994.(10th Dist.).	<i>State v. Jones</i> , 2003-Ohio-5994
Ohio Ct. App., before 2022	<i>State v. Croston</i> , 4th Dist. Athens No. 01CA22, 2001 WL 1346130 (Oct. 30, 2001).	<i>State v. Croston</i> , 2001 WL 1346130 (4th Dist. Oct. 30, 2001).
U.S. Supreme Court	<i>Dutton v. Evans</i> , 400 U.S. 74, 77, 91 S.Ct. 210, 27 L.Ed.2d 213 (1970).	<i>Dutton v. Evans</i> , 400 U.S. 74, 77 (1970).
U.S. Court of Appeals, published	<i>Baker v. Union Twp.</i> , 587 Fed.Appx. 229, 231 (6th Cir.2014).	<i>Baker v. Union Twp.</i> , 587 Fed.Appx. 229, 231 (6th Cir. 2014).

© Copyright 2025 Squire Patton Boggs (US) LLP

National Law Review, Volume XIV, Number 114

Source URL:<https://natlawreview.com/article/ohio-supreme-court-updates-its-writing-manual>