The Bluebook Twentieth Edition

Noteworthy Changes

The Twentieth edition of The Bluebook retains the same basic approach to legal citation established by its predecessors. The layout of The Bluebook has been updated to make the information easier to access. Some citation forms have been expanded, elaborated upon, or modified from previous editions to reflect the ever-expanding range of authorities used in legal writing and to respond to suggestions from the community. Here are some of the noteworthy changes:

The Bluepages

The Bluepages now parallel the Whitepages in numbering and content. Typeface rules have been relaxed to accommodate practitioner use of large and small caps. Bluetable BT2 has been expanded to include more local court citation rules.

The Whitepages

Rule 1.4 provides clearer guidance on when more helpful or authoritative sources should precede other cited authorities within a signal. Rule 1.4(e) clarifies the order of authorities when federal and state legislative materials are cited together.

In rule 1.5(b), the order of parentheticals has been changed to reflect the removal of the “internal quotation marks omitted” and “available at” parentheticals.

Rule 3.2(b) provides additional guidance for citing a range of pages and a single footnote within the range in the same citation.

Rule 3.5 provides guidance on the naming conventions for subdivisions that are numbered or otherwise designated in a piece.

Rule 5.2(d)(i) no longer requires indicating the omission of internal quotation marks.

Rule 10.2.1(f) requires the omission of all geographical terms that follow a comma.

Rule 10.2.2 clarifies that words in a case name that would be abbreviated according to table T6 should not be abbreviated if the words are part of a state, country, or other geographical unit that is the entire name of a party.

Rule 10.9(a)(iii) provides additional guidance on the formation of slip opinion short forms.

Rule 11 now provides guidance on the citation of multiple amendments, sections within the same article, and clauses within the same section.

Rule 12.9.4 combines former rules 12.9.4 and 12.9.5, provides guidance on citing principles, and revises the citation format of model codes, restatements, standards, and guidelines so that authorship of such materials is readily apparent.

Rule 13.5 clarifies what year should be cited when a debate occurs in a different year from publication in the Congressional Record.
Rule 14.2(b) has been expanded to include detailed information on citing comments to agencies.

Rule 14.4 provides detailed information on citing administrative sources found on commercial electronic databases.

Rule 15.8(a) provides updated citation formats for BALLENTINE’S LAW DICTIONARY and BLACK’S LAW DICTIONARY.

Rule 15.9 removes language that requires the use of “available at” in parallel citations.

New rule 15.9(c) introduces a citation format for ebooks. The rule stipulates that the print versions of books are authoritative, but that ebooks may be cited if they are the sole media through which the book is available.

Rule 16.6(a) requires that opinion pieces in newspapers be cited as “Opinion” rather than “Op-Ed.”

Rule 16.6(f) clarifies that online newspapers may be used in place of print newspapers and that the two sources may be used interchangeably if the online source is authenticated or official.

Rule 18 no longer separately categorizes Internet citations as either direct or parallel; all citations are treated as direct. Rule 18.2.1(b)(ii) provides for the direct citation of Internet sources that share the characteristics of a print source such that they can be fully cited according to another rule, whether or not the source is in print. Rule 18.2.1(d) provides guidance on how to cite Internet sources using archival tools. Rule 18.2.2(a) provides guidance on how to cite author information on social media platforms. Rules 18.2.2(b)(iii) and 18.2.2(b)(v) detail how to cite titles for blogs contained within a larger website and titles for social media posts, respectively. Rule 18.3 now catalogs the locations within The Bluebook that provide how to cite various sources found on commercial electronic databases.

Rule 21 has been expanded to include new rules for citing materials from the International Monetary Fund and the International Criminal Court and has adopted simpler ways of citing United Nations documents.

The Tables

Table T1 has been revised to reflect the most current titles for the various statutory compilations, session laws, and administrative compilations and registers. The abbreviations following the states and District of Columbia in table T1.3 have been revised to follow the abbreviation convention for jurisdiction names in the date of parenthetical cases.

Table T2 has been updated to reflect changes in local law and legal citation.

The format of table T13 has been changed from an inclusive list of periodicals to a more general guide to abbreviating periodicals. Table T13.1 contains the abbreviations of common institutional names and table T13.2 lists common words in periodical titles. The table also prescribes abbreviating geographical terms according to table T10. If a word in a periodical title is not included in any of the previously listed tables, revamped table 13 prescribes including the full word.

Terms have been added to tables T6, T8, T14, and T15 as appropriate.