



“If Shepardizing seems like a complex process, it is.”

Miriam J. Baer, *Legal Research in North Carolina* 146 (2006)

USING SHEPARD’S CITATORS

Since 1873, Shepard’s citators have been an important tool for researchers. Even after the emergence of online citators, Shepard’s in print remains a valuable resource. This guide provides step by step instructions on using Shepard’s.

I. What is Shepard’s?

Shepard’s is a citator service for a researcher to:

- Determine if a case, statute or regulation is still good law
- Find additional cases, statutes or regulations that have cited your document.

The process of updating a case is often called “[Shepardizing](#).”

II. Using Shepard’s

1. Find the correct set to use

Shepard’s are shelved following the latest volume of a reporter. The [North Carolina Shepard’s](#) volumes are located in the Carolinas Reference section at KFN 7445.2 .S54. However, the library does not subscribe to all Shepard’s titles, so be sure to check the catalog to find the location of an item.

2. Determine if all the volumes are there

The latest volume’s cover lists what the library should contain. Depending on the date of the case, all of the volumes may be needed to correctly shepardize.

Hardcover: Burgundy (multiple volumes)

Soft cover: Yellow cumulative supplement

Soft cover: Red supplement

Soft cover: Blue monthly express update (Not all series subscribe to the express update.)

3. Look up the case, statute or regulation in the oldest applicable volume

Volume numbers are listed on the top of each page, and page numbers are found in bold: —**66**—. Interpret the symbols preceding and following one’s entry. (See step five on how to interpret symbols and letters.)

4. Interpreting the abbreviations

Due to space restrictions Shepard’s uses different abbreviations than the Bluebook. For example a case from the Federal Supplement is abbreviated as “FS” instead of “F.Supp.” A full list of abbreviations is found at the front of each Shepard’s volume.

5. Interpreting the symbols



There are two sets of letters/symbols: history of a case and treatment of a case. History of a case refers to the activity of the shepardized case. For example, affirmed (“a”), dismissed (“D”), and reversed (“r”) are all examples of a history of a case. Treatment of a case refers to later cases that have cited (favorably or unfavorably and with varying depth), your case. For example, criticized (“c”), distinguished (“d”), and overruled (“o”) are all examples of treatment of a case. A full list of the case history abbreviations is found in the front of each volume, and a full list of treatment abbreviations is found in the back of each volume.

6. Look at the Superscript Numbers (if applicable)

Superscript numbers are used in treatment of a case. The superscript, a small raised number, is used to note that this cited case discusses a specific headnote in the case being shepardized. For more information on headnotes see [Using the West Topic and Key Number System](#).

7. Repeat Steps three to six for all subsequent volumes.

III. Common Problems and Questions with Shepard’s

1. My case isn’t listed!

Each Shepard’s volume contains citations to multiple reporters. Check to make sure you are looking in the correct section. Or your case may not be cited or have any history or treatment in this time period. Be sure to check all volumes; older cases may not be cited for decades before enjoying a resurgence.

2. What is the citation in parenthesis?

The first time a case is cited in Shepard’s a parallel citation is added in parenthesis.

3. How do I find the citation to a case if I only know the name?

A case names citatory is available to help find citations. For example, the [North Carolina Case Names Citator](#) is a commonly used resource for finding pre-1994 citations. To find more recent case names, check the regional Shepard’s case name reporter, or digest.

IV. Other Shepard’s Resources

Always feel free to stop by the Reference Desk for any questions about Shepardizing (or any other legal research issues).

Miriam J. Baer, [Legal Research in North Carolina](#) 135-150 (2006)

Reference: KFN 7475 .B34 2006

Provides illustrations and tips. Examples are specific to North Carolina Shepard’s.

J. Myron Jacobstein, Roy M. Mersky & Donald J. Dunn, [Fundamentals of Legal Research](#) 312 - 350 (7d 1998)

Reference: KF 240 .M469 2002

Contains a detailed discussed of Shepard’s. A [condensed](#) and updated version of this title is located in the Compact Shelving at KF 240 .J32 2002.