

GUIDE TO USING THE UNITED STATES CODE (U.S.C., U.S.C.A., U.S.C.S.)

Introduction

The *United States Code* is the topical compilation of what is printed in the *Statutes at Large*. The United States Code does not contain private laws or temporary provisions such as budget allocations, but the *Statutes at Large* do contain private laws and all acts that were passed by Congress.

One **official** edition of the Code exists, and that is the *U.S.C.* (United States Code) (KF/62/A1/U9) (Fed, Row #5). In addition, two **unofficial** or commercial editions of the Code are available: *U.S.C.A. (United States Code Annotated)* (Fed/KF/62/.A3) (Ref, Row #4) and the *U.S.C.S. (United States Code Service)* (KF/62/1972/L38) (Ref, Row #5). The two unofficial versions of the Code contain everything that is printed in the *U.S.C.*, including annotations to case law relevant to statutory law.

All three versions of the Code are arranged in 50 subject titles. The *U.S.C.* is reissued approximately every six years with cumulative bound supplements published for intervening years. These supplements run about two years behind the current date. The commercial versions of the Code are updated by annual pocket parts and interim supplements, and are preferred over the official edition for their timeliness, easier access to updating a law, and annotations to case law.

All three versions provide notes referring to the history of a law after most sections, an overall index (usually consisting of several volumes), tables containing parallel references between statutory cites, earlier revisions and later texts and presidential documents.

Congress has enacted 25 titles of the *U.S.C.* into **positive** law (see list of titles in recent volume of the *U.S.C.*). In questions of language or wording of laws, the *U.S.C.* (not *U.S.C.A.* or *U.S.C.S.*) would govern for these 25 titles. For the remaining 25 titles of the *U.S.C.* not yet enacted into positive law, the *Statutes at Large* would still govern.

Part 1- U.S.C. (*United States Code*), official edition

There are four approaches to using the *U.S.C.*:

- 1) index
- 2) popular name table
- 3) title outline
- 4) conversion table

1) The subject index is the most usual approach in locating laws. Select the index volume and also the index in the most recent cumulative bound supplements to locate references to statutes enacted since the publication of the main index.

2) The Popular Name Table approach is useful if you know the name of the Act and want to know where it was codified in the *U.S.C.* Locate the volume with "Popular Names" on the spine and find the table: "Acts cited by Popular Name"; use the Popular Names Table in the most recent bound supplement to locate references to the statutes enacted since publication of the main volume. When you notice acts that lack references to *U.S.C.* titles and sections, this indicates the entries have been superseded or

repealed. Earlier editions of the Code or the *Statutes at Large* volume where it was first published can be consulted.

The researcher should also consult *Shepard's Acts and Cases by Popular Names*, Federal and State (KF90 S52 1986) at the Reference Desk.

3) A list of the 50 titles is contained in the front of each *U.S.C.* volume. If you can determine which title you need, e.g., Title 39 -- Postal Service, turn to the "Table of Titles and Chapters" (also in the front of each *U.S.C.* volume). You can further narrow your topic by chapter/subchapter in the latter table and then select the volume containing your title. Be sure you have selected both the main volume and the bound supplement that contain your title; the supplement volume will have a roman numeral as well as the word "supplement" on its spine. Find your title and chapter in the main volume; use the Supplement to update your research. Keep in mind that the Supplement of the *U.S.C.* runs a few years behind the current date. To verify that you have the most current law, you may need to use one of the commercial editions.

4) Finally, the conversion table approach may be used. Locate the "Tables" volume. Several tables may be consulted. The Revised Titles table indicates titles of the *U.S.C.* that have been revised or renumbered since the 1926 adoption of the Code. Former and new section numbers are provided in this table.

The Revised Statutes 1878 table gives cross references from the first Federal Code (published in 1878) to the current Code which uses a different numbering system.

The Statutes at Large table lists acts of Congress in chronological order and where they're codified in the *U.S.C.* Abbreviations indicate what happened to an act if it doesn't appear in the *U.S.C.*

Part 3 -- U.S.C.A. (*United States Code Annotated*)

West's *U.S.C.A.* employs the same titles and section numbers as the *U.S.C.*, and in addition, supplies several other services. Following each section of the Code in the *U.S.C.A.*, abstracts of relevant judicial decisions are provided. Citations to the major reporters are also included. These are the same abstracts that appear in West reporter headnotes and digests. Preceding the annotations in *U.S.C.A.* is usually a simple subject index to the annotations. Other services provided by West are historical notes, key numbers and references to legislative history in *United States Code and Congressional News*, *Corpus Juris Secundum*, and to the *Code of Federal Regulations*.

The *U.S.C.A.* contains the full text of the U.S. Constitution as well as Federal Rules of Civil and Criminal Procedure, Federal Rules of Evidence, Internal Revenue Code, Court Rules for Federal Trial and Appellate Courts. The *U.S.C.A.* index is more detailed than that of the *U.S.C.* In addition, each *U.S.C.A.* title has an individual index. The Popular Names Table, located in the back of the last index volume, is helpful in locating statute and/ or code section by title of the Act. *U.S.C.A.* contains all the same tables previously mentioned in the *U.S.C.* description.

Annual pocket parts update the *U.S.C.A.* Also, quarterly pamphlet supplements provide the same coverage for the whole set between publication of pocket parts.

Part 4 - U.S.C.S. (United States Code Service)

The *U.S.C.S.* is very similar to the *U.S.C.A.* It is published by Lawyers Co-op/Bancroft Whitney. It was preceded by a similar compilation entitled *Federal Code Annotated* (1937-1972, Bobbs-Merrill). *U.S.C.S.* also retains the title and chapter number organization of the official *U.S.C.S.* It receives annual pocket parts and quarterly supplements called "Cumulative Later Case and Statutory Service" covering newer cases and legislative changes to statutes between annual pocket parts.

Also, *U.S.C.S.* provides monthly advance pamphlets that include texts of the new laws and tables indicating code sections that have been affected by this new legislation. Other services include: annotations to court decisions under statutory section; cross references to other Co-op publications, overall index, tables volume, procedural and court rules; popular name table of federal acts; index to the *Code of Federal Regulations*: federal agency rules.

Part 5 - Differences between USCA and USCS

1. *USCA* provides more annotations to cases than *USCS*.
2. *USCS* includes some cases not found in *USCA*.
3. *USCS* annotations of cases are sometimes longer if deemed particularly relevant cases.
4. *USCS* preserves more closely the language and context of the original *Statutes at Large* text. This also means it deviates more from the text of the *U.S.C.*
5. *USCS* provides cross references to many Lawyer's Coop secondary sources and are more extensive than West's cross references.
6. *USCS* is often more timely because of its monthly advance service.
7. *USCS* provides agency procedural rules.

Part 6 - Summary

The official edition of the Code, *U.S.C.* should be consulted if only the text of the legislation is needed. Still, to be thorough in updating any section of the *U.S.C.*, a commercial edition of the Code (*U.S.C.A.* or *U.S.C.S.*) should be used. Even though there may be several advantages in using the *U.S.C.S.* over the *U.S.C.A.*, often both versions should be consulted if citations to every relevant case are necessary. You may choose one over the other simply because you use more West sources or more Lawyer's Co-op sources. Remember to check the various other volumes that are a part of these sets: court rules, procedural rules, etc. These volumes are shelved at the end of the 50 titles of the *U.S.C.A.* or *U.S.C.S.*

Web Access

U.S.C.S. is available on LEXIS and *U.S.C.A.* may be found on Westlaw. The *U.S.C.* is hosted on the following website: www.gpoaccess.gov under the heading, "Legislative Resources."

The Statutes at Large may be found on <http://www.heinonline.org> Access is limited to UF affiliated users. Either logon on campus or use the Proxy Server: <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/ufproxy.html>.

Cornell's Legal Information Institute also has the U.S. Code. <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/> It is generated from the most recent official version made available by the US House of Representatives. For exact information about the currency of any particular title as it is published by the House, see the listing on the House server. The date of any text appearing on this site appears in italics at the upper right in every Code section. The file may be searched by code section or browsed.