

Tips for Conducting Federal Statutory Research in Print

Location of print sources for federal statutory research in the law library:

Slip Laws (the popular title):
(Officially called Public Laws in BISON)
Federal Core Collection: US 002 A25
Published irregularly

United States Statutes at Large:
Federal Core Collection: US 002 A2
Published annually since 1937

United States Code (U.S.C.):
Federal Core Collection: US 003 U5

United States Code Annotated (U.S.C.A.):
Federal Core Collection: US 003 U6

United States Code Service (U.S.C.S.):
Federal Core Collection: US 003 U67

Once federal statutes are codified, they are organized into 50 Titles, with each Title broken into Chapters, which are then subdivided into Sections

U.S.C. is the official federal code that is published by the government – it is the one you cite to

U.S.C. is several years behind and unannotated, so not good for research

For researching, you should use an unofficial annotated code because it contains much more information about each statute, such as case summaries, ALR annotations, and law review articles

The annotated statutes are U.S.C.A. (also on Westlaw) and U.S.C.S. (also on Lexis)

Make sure you don't cite to the unofficial versions in any of your assignments or papers

Four steps to follow:

(If you have a specific citation, you can begin with step 2)

1. Look up your topic in the General Index (organized alphabetically)
2. Find the relevant section(s) in the main volumes and consult the annotations (volumes organized numerically by Title)
3. Update using the pocket part(s) (published annually)
 - a. Any new statutory language in the pocket part supersedes the older language
4. Finish updating with supplementary pamphlets
 - a. U.S.C.A.'s pamphlets are non-cumulative, so you need to check each one that has been released since the last pocket part
 - b. U.S.C.S. has cumulative supplements, so you just need to consult the most recent one