

LS 201
TEMPLATE—Case Brief

[Student Name]
Case Brief #1

Citation:

*Blue Book format; e.g. **Higgins v. Pfeiffer**, 215 Mich.App. 423; 546 N.W.2d 645 (1996).*

Parties:

Names of the parties and their roles at trial and on appeal

Facts:

This is the “what happened” that made someone bring the whole case to court in the first place. Include the material facts that happened before this particular case entered the legal system.

Procedural History:

The story of what happened since the case entered the legal system. It will start with something like, “Plaintiff’s filed suit in the Circuit Court for Kent County, Michigan, claiming...” In a criminal case, the case enters the system when the defendant is arrested, so this section would start, “Defendant was arrested and charged with grand theft auto in San Andreas County, California.”

*Include the outcome at trial and at any earlier level of appeal. When dealing with the outcome at trial, it is more than, “Defendant won at trial.” You must also include whether it was based on a jury verdict, a motion, or whatever. **Do not include the final outcome of the case, save what the court writing the opinion decided for later in the brief. This section ends with something like, “Defendant appealed to the Michigan Court of Appeals.”***

Issue:

This is the legal question (or questions) the court had to decide to rule on the case. Opinions sometimes include discussion about things that don’t matter to the outcome. Look for your context-clues in the opinion for the issue(s). Issues should be written as yes/no questions and include a little bit of the facts and law at issue, instead of being completely abstract.

Holding:

This is how the court answered the question in the Issue section. It should be written as a full sentence: “Yes, Plaintiff can bring maintain a claim against Defendant because...”

Reasoning:

The step-by-step analysis of how the court got from the issue to the holding. Here you will include the law the court said applied to the issue, and how the court examined the facts of the case with that law to reach the conclusion.

Dissenting/Concurring Opinions:

A short summary of why any judges writing dissenting or concurring opinions did not fully agree with the majority.

Disposition:

The final outcome of the case, in as few words as possible. Ex: “Affirmed,” “Reversed,” or “Reversed and Remanded.”