**Writing a Case Brief**

Adapted from: http://www.cjed.com/brief.htm

A case brief is a study aid that summarizes the key elements of a legal case. At minimum, a case brief outlines the facts of the case, legal issues raised, and the rationale for the court’s decision.

**1. Case Name/Key Parties**

v.

(petitioner) (respondent)

**2. Date of decision (in highest court)**

**3. Procedural Background (How the Case Moved Through the Court System)**

* How did this case get to this particular court?
* What was the decision(s) of the previous lower court(s)?
* Use the chart below to help you. Include dates and case names, as necessary.

Supreme Court of the United States

↑

Appellate Court

↑

District Court

**4. Facts of the case**

* What was the incident that brought the case before the court?
* Who are the people involved?
* What laws/regulations were broken?

**5. Legal Issue**

* In the form of a question (e.g. “Do students have the right to….?”)
* Concise and in your own simplified words!

**6. Decision (a.k.a. Ruling)**

* How did the court resolve the legal issue stated in #5?
* What action did the court take?

Note the following vocabulary:

*Affirmed* = The appellate court agrees with the opinion of the lower court

*Reversed* = The appellate court disagrees with the opinion of the lower court

*Remanded* **=** The case is sent back to the court from which it came for further action

**7. Rationale**

* Why did the court reach the decision it did?
* What arguments and legal principles justify the decision?

**8. Key quotations**

* Find at least one quotation that explains the legal issue in the case
* Find at least one quotation that explains the ruling
* Find at least one quotation that gets to the heart of the court’s rationale