**CASE BRIEF**

**What is a Case Brief?**

A case brief is a written document that outlines and condenses a legal case, presenting the legal facts and rulings of that particular case.  In other words, a case brief is a complete summary of a legal decision.

**Key Aspects of a Case Brief**

After examining information regarding case briefs by Michael and John Makdisi (2009) and the Sydney Law School (2014), I have outlined five key aspects that you must include in order to write a proper case brief. No individual aspect is more important than the other!

* The **first step is the Style of Cause,** which is essentially just a term used to describe the case name and citation. In this step, you would determine *who was involved* in the case and what year it took place.
* The **second step is Facts.** This section provides an overview of the most critical facts of the case, including all of the relevant people, actions, locations and objects involved. In this step, you would determine *what happened* in the case.  This section also asks you about the procedural history of the case.  If applicable, you would need to answer which courts have heard the case already and what their decision was in prior trials.
* The **third step is Issues.** This section outlines the main legal questions that the court was asked to answer. When completing this section, it is advised that you write each issue as a “yes/no” formatted question that summarizes what legal issues are being addressed by the case. In this step, you would determine *what legal issues* the court is required to decide.
* The **fourth step is the Holding,** which is another word used to refer to the results of the case. In this step, you would determine *what decision* the judge made in the case.
* The **fifth and final step is Ratio Decidendi**, or the reasons for the holding. The ratio identifies what is important about a case from a legal perspective and also what effect it might have on society. It is important because the legal precedents set by the Supreme Court of Canada are binding on lower courts and will therefore influence how they decide similar cases. This section includes the legal rules and precedents the court followed to make its decision and how it justified its application of the law in this particular case. In this step, you would determine *what legal principle* this decision stood for and *what explanation* the court gave for it.