

I like this "Every oath ought to be founded on certain knowledge. 4 Co. Inst. 279. — does this mean coke reports #4 Co tell me more please I want to learn to fish for myself and are there other that stand out concerning oath

The citation "**4 Co. Inst. 279**" does not refer to "Coke Reports #4 Co." It is shorthand for **Volume 4 of the *Institutes of the Laws of England*** by Sir Edward Coke, specifically referring to **page 279** within that volume. Here is how to break down the citation and learn to "fish" for yourself:

How to Decipher "4 Co. Inst. 279"

- **4:** This indicates the specific **volume number** of the publication. Sir Edward Coke's *Institutes* were published in four separate volumes.
- **Co. Inst.:** This is the abbreviation for **Coke's Institutes** (the full title is *The Institutes of the Laws of England*).
- **279:** This is the specific **page number** where the information can be found in that volume.

The citation format is a traditional, shorthand way legal scholars and practitioners used to direct readers to precise locations within historical legal texts.

Maxims Concerning Oaths from Coke

The maxim you provided, "**Every oath ought to be founded on certain knowledge**" (*Jura eodem modo quo constituuntur, dissolvuntur*), is a fundamental principle relating to evidence and testimony. It emphasizes that an oath to tell the truth is meaningless if the person swearing it has no actual knowledge of the facts they are testifying to.

Other significant maxims and points concerning oaths found in Coke's works and common law tradition include:

- ***Nemo tenetur seipsum accusare* (No man is bound to accuse himself):** While not *strictly* about oaths in general, it relates to compelled testimony and oaths in legal proceedings, a foundational principle against self-incrimination that Coke championed, particularly in Volume 3 of his *Institutes*.
- **Regarding Perjury:** Coke frequently discusses the gravity of false oaths. He covers the definition and punishment of perjury in great detail, emphasizing that it is a grave offense against both the law and God.
- **"An oath is a corporal oath":** Coke discusses the ritual of taking an oath (holding the Bible, etc.), stressing the solemnity and physical act involved in swearing to God. He underscores that oaths must be taken seriously and legally administered.
- **Oaths Must Be Lawful:** Coke makes clear that no one can be compelled to take an *unlawful* oath or an oath on a matter over which the court has no jurisdiction.

To find more of these, you would need to consult Volume 2, 3, and 4 of his *Institutes*, where he discusses specific crimes (like perjury), court structures, and jurisdiction.

"Every oath ought to be founded on certain knowledge. 4 Co. Inst. 279" is a concise way of citing a legal maxim from Sir Edward Coke's works. Here is how to interpret the citation and what it means:

How to "Fish" for Yourself: Interpreting the Citation

The citation **4 Co. Inst. 279** can be broken down as follows:

- **4:** Refers to the **Fourth** volume or "Part" of the publication. Coke published his major legal treatises in four parts.
- **Co. Inst.:** This is an abbreviation for **Coke's *Institutes*** (of the Laws of England). This is the work where this maxim is found.
- **279:** Refers to the **page number** within that specific volume where the statement appears.

So, the citation directs a reader to page 279 of the fourth volume of Coke's *Institutes*.

The Maxim's Meaning

The quote "**Every oath ought to be founded on certain knowledge**" means that when a person takes an oath (such as when testifying as a witness in court or swearing an affidavit), **they should only swear to facts they know to be true based on their own direct, certain knowledge** (personal observation or reliable information).

An oath is a solemn declaration to tell the truth. This maxim emphasizes that the integrity of an oath is dependent on the truthfulness and certainty of the knowledge behind it. Swearing to something you only suspect, guess, or have no knowledge of undermines the entire purpose of an oath and can constitute perjury.

Other Maxims on Oaths/Perjury by Coke

Sir Edward Coke had a lot to say about the integrity of oaths and the seriousness of perjury. Here are some other related maxims or principles from his works:

- ***Jurare est Deum in testem vocare:* To swear is to call God to witness.** This highlights the solemn, religious significance of an

oath in common law, explaining why perjury was considered such a grave offense.

- **"An oath is to conclude the controversy."** Oaths were historically seen as having a powerful, final role in legal proceedings, intended to settle disputes by appealing to divine truth.
- ***Nemo allegans turpitudinem suam est audiendus*: No one alleging his own baseness (or infamy/wickedness) is to be heard.** While broader, this applies to situations where a witness might try to use their own prior dishonest or illegal conduct (like a history of perjury) to escape the consequences of an oath.
- **"Perjury is a crime committed when a lawful oath is administered by any that hath authority, to any person, in any judicial proceeding, and he sweareth absolutely, and falsely in a matter material to the issue, or cause in question."** (From the *Third Institute*, a treatise on criminal law). This provides the formal, strict definition of the crime, underlining the necessity of truthfulness under oath.
- Sir Edward Coke stands as authority not by reputation alone, but by recorded acts of law and state. He was duly admitted and called to the Bar at the Inner Temple, thereby enrolled as an officer within the courts of record; he thereafter served in the highest legal offices of the realm, including Attorney General and Chief Justice, each office animated by oath and evidenced in the rolls and proceedings of the courts. These were not honorary roles but fiduciary offices, exercised under the common law and preserved in the perpetual record that courts of record "speak forever."

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- Coke's knighthood—the sovereign act by which he became Sir Edward Coke—was itself a juridical act of the Crown, creating a change of legal status that was public, formal, and recorded in the state's rolls and chronicles. From that point forward, his style and authority as "Sir" appear consistently across judicial opinions, parliamentary records, and legal treatises, confirming recognition of the act in law. Importantly, Coke died bearing that title; it was never revoked, forfeited, or disclaimed. Thus, his authority rests on a stacked chain of record: admission and oath → office and service → elevation by the sovereign, all preserved in the record. When Coke speaks of oaths, offices, and reason at common law, he speaks from within jurisdiction, as a sworn and recorded officer whose status endured to his death.