

chicago citation examples for government documents

Understanding Chicago Citation Examples for Government Documents

chicago citation examples for government documents are essential for academic and professional researchers navigating the complexities of official publications. Properly citing government sources ensures that your work is credible, allows readers to locate the original material, and adheres to established academic standards. This guide will delve into the nuances of citing various types of government documents using the Chicago Manual of Style, covering both notes-and-bibliography and author-date systems. We will explore how to cite legislative acts, congressional reports, federal agency publications, and international governmental organizations. Mastering these Chicago citation examples for government documents will significantly enhance the rigor and clarity of your research.

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The Chicago Manual of Style and Government Documents

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) provides comprehensive guidelines for academic citation, and this extends to the often-complex realm of government documents. These documents, originating from local, state, federal, and international bodies, require specific attention to detail in their citation

to ensure accuracy and verifiability. Understanding the foundational principles of Chicago citation examples for government documents is the first step in correctly attributing these valuable resources.

Government publications encompass a vast array of materials, from legislative statutes and committee reports to agency regulations and statistical surveys. Each type may have unique elements that need to be included in a citation. The Chicago Manual of Style aims to provide a consistent framework for presenting this information, allowing readers to easily identify and retrieve the source. Whether you are using the notes-and-bibliography system or the author-date system, the core objective remains the same: clear and complete attribution.

Notes-and-Bibliography System: Citing Government Documents

The notes-and-bibliography system is prevalent in the humanities and some social sciences. When citing government documents, this system requires detailed footnotes or endnotes for in-text citations, followed by a bibliography at the end of the work. The key is to provide enough information in the note for the reader to locate the source, and then to consolidate this information in the bibliography.

Footnotes and Endnotes for Government Documents

When citing government documents in footnotes or endnotes, you typically need to include the issuing agency, the title of the document, and publication details. For legislative documents, the act name and session information are crucial. For agency reports, the title, publication number (if available), and date are essential. The exact format can vary depending on the specific type of document, but the principle of providing clear identification remains constant.

Consider a federal agency report. A typical footnote might look like this: "U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Diabetes Statistics Report, 2020, DHHS Publication No. (CDC) 2020-XXXX (Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020)." This provides the agency, the full title, any relevant publication numbers, and the place and year of publication. These details are vital for accurate Chicago citation examples for government documents.

Bibliography Entries for Government Documents

The bibliography entry consolidates the information from your notes into a more condensed format. It should include the issuing agency, the title (often italicized), and publication information. The agency is usually listed first, followed by the title, and then the publication details. For consistency and ease of retrieval, all government documents are typically alphabetized by the name of the issuing agency in the bibliography.

The bibliography entry for the above example would appear as: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *National Diabetes Statistics Report*, 2020. DHHS Publication No. (CDC) 2020-XXXX. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020.

Author-Date System: Citing Government Documents

The author-date system, common in the sciences and social sciences, uses in-text parenthetical citations that include the author's last name and the publication year. A corresponding reference list at the end of the work provides full bibliographic details. For government documents, the “author” is typically the issuing agency.

In-Text Citations in the Author-Date System

In-text citations for government documents in the author-date system follow the standard author-year format. For example, if citing the aforementioned CDC report, the parenthetical citation might appear as (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2020). If the agency name is long, it can be abbreviated after its first full use, as long as the abbreviation is clearly defined. However, for clarity, especially with numerous government sources, using the full agency name is often preferable in the in-text citation.

When referring to specific sections or pages, you can add the page number within the parentheses: (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2020, 45). This level of detail is crucial for enabling your readers to pinpoint the exact information you are referencing, making your Chicago citation examples for government documents highly functional.

Reference List Entries for Government Documents

The reference list entry in the author-date system for government documents provides comprehensive details. It typically begins with the issuing agency

as the author, followed by the publication date, the title of the work, and any relevant publication information. The title of the document is usually italicized.

For the CDC report example, the reference list entry would be: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2020. National Diabetes Statistics Report, 2020. DHHS Publication No. (CDC) 2020-XXXX. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Common Types of Government Documents and Their Chicago Citation Examples

Different types of government documents require specific formatting within the Chicago Manual of Style. Familiarizing yourself with these variations will ensure accurate and professional citations. Here are some common categories and their respective Chicago citation examples for government documents.

Legislative Acts and Statutes

Citing legislative acts requires precision regarding the act's name, its session, and its official compilation. For the notes-and-bibliography system, a footnote might include the act's official title and Public Law number, if applicable. In the bibliography, the entry would be structured to clearly identify the legislation.

Example (Notes-and-Bibliography):

- Note: Affordable Care Act, Pub. L. No. 111-148, 124 Stat. 119 (2010).
- Bibliography: Affordable Care Act. Pub. L. No. 111-148. 124 Stat. 119. 2010.

For the author-date system, the in-text citation would focus on the act name and year, and the reference list entry would mirror the bibliography format with the year prominently placed.

Example (Author-Date):

- In-text: (Affordable Care Act 2010)
- Reference List: Affordable Care Act. 2010. Pub. L. No. 111-148. 124

Congressional Reports and Hearings

Congressional documents, such as committee reports and hearing transcripts, are crucial sources for legislative history and policy analysis. These citations need to identify the congress, session, committee, and the specific report or hearing title.

Example (Notes-and-Bibliography):

- Note: U.S. Congress, House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Examining the Impact of the Pandemic on Consumer Protection, 117th Cong., 1st sess., June 15, 2021.
- Bibliography: U.S. Congress. House Committee on Energy and Commerce. Examining the Impact of the Pandemic on Consumer Protection. 117th Cong., 1st sess., June 15, 2021.

In the author-date system, the agency (Congress and the specific committee) and year are central.

Example (Author-Date):

- In-text: (U.S. Congress, House Committee on Energy and Commerce 2021)
- Reference List: U.S. Congress. House Committee on Energy and Commerce. 2021. Examining the Impact of the Pandemic on Consumer Protection. 117th Cong., 1st sess., June 15, 2021.

Federal Agency Publications

Publications from federal agencies, such as reports, statistical data, and policy statements, are a cornerstone of research in many fields. The issuing agency is paramount in these citations.

Example (Notes-and-Bibliography):

- Note: National Archives and Records Administration, Guide to Federal Records in the National Archives of the United States, rev. ed.

(Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1995).

- Bibliography: National Archives and Records Administration. Guide to Federal Records in the National Archives of the United States. Revised edition. Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1995.

The author-date system emphasizes the agency and publication year.

Example (Author-Date):

- In-text: (National Archives and Records Administration 1995)
- Reference List: National Archives and Records Administration. 1995. Guide to Federal Records in the National Archives of the United States. Revised edition. Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration.

International Governmental Organizations

Citing documents from international bodies like the United Nations or the World Health Organization requires careful identification of the organization and the specific publication.

Example (Notes-and-Bibliography):

- Note: World Health Organization, Global Status Report on Road Safety 2018 (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2018).
- Bibliography: World Health Organization. Global Status Report on Road Safety 2018. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2018.

For the author-date system, the organization and year are the core components.

Example (Author-Date):

- In-text: (World Health Organization 2018)
- Reference List: World Health Organization. 2018. Global Status Report on Road Safety 2018. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Tips for Citing Government Documents Accurately

Accurate citation of government documents relies on attention to detail and a systematic approach. Several best practices can help ensure your citations are correct and conform to the Chicago Manual of Style. These tips are crucial for anyone aiming to produce authoritative academic or professional work.

Here are some key considerations:

- **Identify the Issuing Body:** Always determine the primary government agency or legislative body responsible for creating the document. This often serves as the author.
- **Note Publication Details:** Pay close attention to publication numbers, session information, dates, and any specific identifiers provided by the government publisher.
- **Use Official Titles:** Whenever possible, use the full and official title of the document. Avoid abbreviations unless they are standard and clearly defined.
- **Distinguish Between Systems:** Be consistent with either the notes-and-bibliography system or the author-date system throughout your work. Do not mix them.
- **Consult the Latest CMOS Edition:** The Chicago Manual of Style is periodically updated. Always refer to the most recent edition for the most current guidelines, especially as government publishing practices can evolve.
- **Handle Online Sources Carefully:** If citing a government document accessed online, include the URL and the date you accessed it, particularly if there's no persistent identifier like a DOI.
- **Be Precise with Legislative Citations:** For laws and statutes, include the Public Law number, volume, and page number in the U.S. Statutes at Large, if applicable, along with the year.

Adhering to these principles will significantly improve the quality and credibility of your research when using government documents. These detailed Chicago citation examples for government documents serve as a roadmap for navigating this complex area.

Conclusion

Mastering Chicago citation examples for government documents is a vital skill for researchers across disciplines. By understanding the distinct requirements of the notes-and-bibliography and author-date systems, and by paying close attention to the specific formats for various government publications—from legislative acts to international reports—you can ensure accuracy, transparency, and academic integrity in your work. The resources provided here offer a comprehensive foundation for citing these essential sources, empowering you to build well-supported and credible arguments.

Q: What is the most common mistake people make when citing government documents in Chicago style?

A: One of the most common mistakes is not clearly identifying the issuing government agency as the author, especially when the document appears to have an individual author listed. In Chicago style, the primary responsibility for government publications typically lies with the agency that produced it, and this agency should be treated as the author in the citation.

Q: How do I cite a government document that I found online?

A: When citing a government document found online in Chicago style, you should include the URL and the date of access, especially if the document lacks a stable identifier like a DOI. The citation should still include all the standard bibliographic information for the document itself (agency, title, publication details).

Q: Should I italicize the titles of government documents in Chicago style?

A: Yes, generally, the titles of government documents should be italicized in Chicago style, similar to how book titles are treated. This applies to both the notes and the bibliography or reference list entries.

Q: What is the difference between citing a U.S. federal document and a state government document?

A: The fundamental principles of Chicago citation remain the same. However, for state government documents, you will typically begin with the state's name followed by the relevant department or agency. The structure for legislative documents will also vary based on how each state organizes its legislative records.

Q: How do I cite a treaty or international agreement in Chicago style?

A: For international governmental organizations and their documents, including treaties, you generally treat the organization as the author. The citation should include the organization's name, the title of the treaty or agreement, and publication details, such as the official treaty series and year.

Q: Is it necessary to include publication numbers for government documents?

A: Yes, publication numbers, such as Superintendent of Documents (SuDoc) numbers or report numbers, are highly recommended and often crucial for accurately identifying government documents. They provide a precise way for readers to locate the specific publication.

Q: What if a government document has both an agency and an individual author?

A: In cases where a government document lists both an agency and an individual author, the Chicago Manual of Style generally suggests treating the agency as the author and mentioning the individual author as part of the title or description if they played a significant role in its creation, or if the specific guidelines for that document type dictate otherwise. However, for most reports and official publications, the agency is the primary author.

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