

chicago indirect source citation

Understanding Chicago Indirect Source Citation

chicago indirect source citation refers to the crucial practice of acknowledging information that has been found through another source, rather than directly from the original work. This is a common challenge in academic writing and research, especially when primary sources are difficult to access or a secondary source offers a particularly compelling interpretation or summary. Mastering this citation style ensures academic integrity, avoids plagiarism, and allows readers to trace the lineage of ideas. This article will delve into the nuances of citing indirect sources within the Chicago Manual of Style, covering its definition, when to use it, how to format it correctly in both footnotes/endnotes and the bibliography, and common pitfalls to avoid. We will explore the essential components of an indirect citation and provide clear, actionable guidance for researchers.

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What is a Chicago Indirect Source Citation?

A Chicago indirect source citation, often referred to as citing a source "as cited in" another, is employed when you encounter information or a quotation within a secondary source, and you have not personally consulted the original primary source. The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) acknowledges that there are occasions when consulting the original work might be impractical, impossible, or even unnecessary if the secondary source accurately represents the original and provides valuable commentary. However, even in these instances, ethical scholarship demands that you attribute the information to its ultimate origin, while also acknowledging the source through which you encountered it. This practice is distinct from simply paraphrasing or quoting a secondary source that is discussing a general topic; it specifically pertains to information or direct quotes attributed to a particular author or work that is itself being referenced by another.

The Distinction Between Direct and Indirect Citations

It is vital to differentiate between a direct citation and an indirect one. A direct citation occurs when you consult a primary source, such as a book, article, or archival document, and you cite that specific work. An indirect citation, conversely, arises when you find a quotation or a specific piece of information that a secondary author has attributed to an earlier, primary source. For example, if you are reading a biography of Abraham Lincoln and the author quotes a letter Lincoln wrote, but you have not seen the original letter yourself, then you are encountering an indirect source. You must then cite both Lincoln (as the author of the original statement) and the biographer (as the source through which you accessed that statement).

When to Use Chicago Indirect Source Citation

The decision to use a Chicago indirect source citation should not be taken lightly. It is generally preferable to consult the original source whenever possible. However, there are specific scenarios where citing an indirect source is acceptable and even necessary. These typically include situations where the primary source is exceedingly rare, difficult to obtain, written in a language you do not comprehend, or when the secondary source offers a particularly valuable and accurate excerpt or interpretation that is central

to your argument. For instance, if an influential scholar has extensively quoted a long-lost document, and their quotation is widely accepted and crucial for understanding the topic, citing it indirectly might be permissible.

Formatting Chicago Indirect Source Citations: Notes

In the Chicago Manual of Style, indirect sources are primarily handled within the note system (footnotes or endnotes). This is where you will indicate that you are citing a source that was itself cited by another. The goal of the note is to provide enough information for a reader to locate the original source if they wish, while clearly indicating the intermediary through which the information was accessed.

Basic Structure of a Note Citation

The standard format for citing an indirect source in a Chicago note begins with the information about the secondary source (the one you actually read), followed by the phrase "as quoted in" or "cited in," and then the details of the original, primary source. When available, you should include page numbers for both the secondary source where you found the information and the primary source as indicated by the secondary source.

Specific Examples for Indirect Source Notes

Let's illustrate with a common scenario. Suppose you are reading a modern history book that quotes directly from an original diary entry by a historical figure, but you do not have access to the diary itself.

For a book quotation, the note might look something like this:

First citation in a note:

John Smith, "Recollections of the Civil War," in *American Diaries*, ed. Jane Doe (New York: Academic Press, 2010), 45, as quoted in Richard Roe, *The Lincoln Era Revisited* (Chicago: University Press, 2020), 112.

Subsequent citations in notes:

Smith, "Recollections of the Civil War," 45, as quoted in Roe, *Lincoln Era Revisited*, 112.

If you are referencing an idea or paraphrase from an indirect source, the structure is similar:

First citation in a note:

Richard Roe, in *The Lincoln Era Revisited* (Chicago: University Press, 2020), 112, discusses Abraham Lincoln's views on states' rights as expressed in a letter to Stephen Douglas (dated October 15, 1858), though the original letter has not been directly consulted by this author.

Subsequent citations in notes:

Roe, *Lincoln Era Revisited*, 112.

Formatting Chicago Indirect Source Citations: Bibliography

The inclusion of indirect sources in your bibliography requires careful consideration. While the primary purpose of a bibliography is to list the works you have directly consulted, the Chicago Manual of Style provides guidance on how to handle indirect citations in this section as well.

When an Indirect Source Appears in the Bibliography

Generally, if you cite an indirect source in your notes, you should also include the secondary source (the one you read) in your bibliography. The primary source, which you have not consulted, is typically not listed in the bibliography. The bibliography serves as a list of the resources that the reader can access for further information based on your work, and since the reader cannot access the primary source through your bibliography, it is omitted.

Adapting Note Entries for the Bibliography

The bibliography entry for the secondary source should resemble a standard entry for that type of publication, but it should not explicitly mention that it was used to cite an indirect source. The "as cited in" or similar phrasing is reserved for the notes.

For the book example above, the bibliography entry would be:

Roe, Richard. *The Lincoln Era Revisited*. Chicago: University Press, 2020.

The reader, if interested in the original quote or idea, would then need to consult Roe's book and potentially the sources he references for further investigation.

Key Elements of an Effective Chicago Indirect Source Citation

Regardless of whether you are using notes or your bibliography, certain elements are crucial for an effective Chicago indirect source citation. These elements ensure clarity, transparency, and academic honesty.

- **Identification of the Secondary Source:** Clearly state the author, title, publication details, and page number(s) of the source you actually consulted.
- **Reference to the Primary Source:** Indicate the author and title (and if possible, publication details) of the original work that the secondary source is referencing.
- **Connecting Phrase:** Use phrases like "as quoted in," "cited in," or "as discussed in" to explicitly link the information to its original author and the secondary source.
- **Page Numbers:** Provide page numbers for the secondary source where the information was found. If the secondary source indicates the page number(s) of the primary source, include those as well.

Common Pitfalls in Chicago Indirect Source Citation

Navigating indirect source citations can be tricky, and several common mistakes can undermine the integrity of your work. Awareness of these pitfalls can help you avoid them.

Over-Reliance on Indirect Sources

One of the most significant issues is relying too heavily on indirect sources. When possible, always strive to access and cite the original primary sources. This demonstrates a deeper level of research and avoids perpetuating potential errors or misinterpretations from secondary sources.

Plagiarism

Failing to acknowledge that you encountered information indirectly can easily

lead to unintentional plagiarism. If you present information from a secondary source that is quoting or referencing a primary source without properly attributing both, you risk misleading your readers and committing academic dishonesty.

Incomplete Citation Information

Another common error is providing insufficient information in the note or bibliography. Omitting necessary details like page numbers, author names, or publication dates can make it difficult, if not impossible, for your readers to locate the sources, defeating the purpose of citation.

Misinterpreting the Secondary Source

When quoting or paraphrasing an indirect source, there's always a risk of misinterpreting what the secondary author is saying about the primary source. Double-checking the context and clarity of the information presented by the secondary source is essential.

The Importance of Primary Source Accessibility

While Chicago style allows for indirect citations, it is always best practice to consult primary sources whenever feasible. The availability of primary sources has increased dramatically with digitization and online archives, making it more accessible than ever to engage with original materials. Accessing primary sources allows for a more nuanced understanding, direct engagement with the author's original voice, and the ability to critically evaluate the secondary source's interpretation. It also ensures that your citations are as precise and verifiable as possible.

Conclusion: Ensuring Accuracy and Integrity

Understanding and correctly implementing Chicago indirect source citation is a hallmark of rigorous academic practice. It demonstrates a commitment to intellectual honesty and provides readers with the necessary tools to trace the origins of ideas and information. By carefully following the guidelines for notes and bibliographies, clearly identifying both the secondary and primary sources, and prioritizing direct consultation of original materials whenever possible, researchers can uphold the highest standards of scholarly integrity. Mastering this aspect of Chicago style will undoubtedly enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of your academic work.

FAQ

Q: What is the core principle behind citing an indirect source in Chicago style?

A: The core principle is to acknowledge the original author of the information or quotation while clearly indicating that you encountered it through a secondary source that you have consulted.

Q: When is it acceptable to cite an indirect source in Chicago style?

A: It is acceptable when the primary source is unavailable, inaccessible, extremely rare, or when the secondary source provides a crucial and accurate representation of the original material that is essential for your argument.

Q: How do I format an indirect source citation in a Chicago footnote or endnote?

A: You typically begin with the details of the secondary source (author, title, page number), followed by "as quoted in" or "cited in," and then the details of the primary source (author, title, and if available, page number).

Q: Should the primary source be included in my bibliography if I cited it indirectly?

A: No, the primary source that you have not directly consulted is generally not included in the bibliography. Only the secondary source you actually read should appear there.

Q: What phrase should I use to indicate an indirect source in my notes?

A: Common phrases include "as quoted in," "cited in," or "as discussed in."

Q: What happens if the secondary source does not provide page numbers for the primary source?

A: If the secondary source only indicates the author and title of the primary source without specific page numbers, you would cite what information is available, noting the lack of specific page references for the original.

Q: Can I paraphrase information from an indirect source without using "as quoted in"?

A: Yes, you can paraphrase, but you still need to indicate the source through which you found the information. The note would generally refer to the secondary source and mention that the idea originates from the primary source without using the exact "as quoted in" phrasing for a direct quote.

Q: What are the risks of citing indirect sources improperly?

A: The main risks include unintentional plagiarism, misrepresenting the original author's intent, and making it difficult for readers to verify the information, thus undermining the credibility of your work.

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