

chicago manual for citing scripture

The Chicago Manual for Citing Scripture: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago manual for citing scripture provides a standardized and authoritative framework for accurately referencing biblical texts and other sacred writings within academic and scholarly works. Proper citation is crucial for maintaining academic integrity, allowing readers to verify sources, and demonstrating a thorough understanding of the material. This guide will delve into the intricacies of Chicago style for scripture, covering essential elements such as author attribution, book names, chapter and verse indications, and the distinction between notes and bibliographies. We will explore the nuances of citing different versions of the Bible and other religious texts, ensuring clarity and precision in your academic writing. Mastering these principles will enhance the credibility of your research and contribute to effective communication within your field.

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Understanding the Basics of Scripture Citation in Chicago Style

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) offers a robust system for citing religious texts, recognizing their unique status in many scholarly disciplines. Unlike typical authored books, sacred scriptures often lack a single, identifiable author in the modern sense. Therefore, CMOS provides specific guidelines to address this distinction, prioritizing clarity and consistency for readers. The fundamental goal is to enable anyone to locate the exact passage being referenced with minimal effort.

The primary methods for citing scripture in Chicago style involve either footnotes/endnotes or a bibliography. The choice between these often depends on the citation system employed by the specific academic field or publisher: author-date or notes-bibliography. Regardless of the system, the underlying information required for accurate citation remains consistent.

Citing the Bible: Core Principles and Common

Practices

When citing the Bible, the Chicago Manual of Style emphasizes a straightforward approach that prioritizes the name of the biblical book, followed by chapter and verse numbers. For most common citations, especially within the text or in notes, the full book name is often abbreviated according to a standard list provided by CMOS. This abbreviation ensures conciseness without sacrificing clarity. The structure typically follows: Book Chapter:Verse.

For instance, a citation to the Book of Genesis, chapter 1, verse 1 would appear as Gen. 1:1. It is important to note that the colon separates the chapter from the verse, and verses are typically indicated by the number following the colon. If referencing a range of verses, a hyphen is used. For example, John 3:16-18 would refer to verses 16 through 18 of the third chapter of the Gospel of John. Consistency in abbreviation and formatting is paramount for professional academic writing.

Abbreviating Book Names

Chicago style provides a standardized list of abbreviations for biblical books. This list is essential to consult to ensure you are using the correct and universally recognized abbreviations. These abbreviations are used in both notes and, when applicable, in the bibliography. Familiarizing yourself with this list will significantly streamline the citation process and ensure uniformity across your work.

Some common examples of abbreviations include:

- Gen. for Genesis
- Exod. for Exodus
- Lev. for Leviticus
- Num. for Numbers
- Deut. for Deuteronomy
- Josh. for Joshua
- Judg. for Judges
- 1 Sam. for 1 Samuel
- 2 Sam. for 2 Samuel
- 1 Kings for 1 Kings
- 2 Kings for 2 Kings

- Ps. for Psalms
- Prov. for Proverbs
- Eccl. for Ecclesiastes
- Isa. for Isaiah
- Jer. for Jeremiah
- Ezek. for Ezekiel
- Dan. for Daniel
- Matt. for Matthew
- Mark for Mark
- Luke for Luke
- John for John
- Acts for Acts
- Rom. for Romans
- 1 Cor. for 1 Corinthians
- 2 Cor. for 2 Corinthians
- Gal. for Galatians
- Eph. for Ephesians
- Phil. for Philippians
- Col. for Colossians
- 1 Thess. for 1 Thessalonians
- 2 Thess. for 2 Thessalonians
- 1 Tim. for 1 Timothy
- 2 Tim. for 2 Timothy
- Heb. for Hebrews
- Jas. for James
- 1 Pet. for 1 Peter

- 2 Pet. for 2 Peter
- 1 John for 1 John
- 2 John for 2 John
- 3 John for 3 John
- Jude for Jude
- Rev. for Revelation

Distinguishing Notes and Bibliography Entries

In the notes-bibliography system, the first time a particular passage of scripture is cited, a full note is typically required. Subsequent citations of the same passage can be shortened. However, when compiling a bibliography at the end of a work, scripture citations are generally not included unless a specific commentary or edition of the Bible is being referenced. This is because the Bible is considered a foundational text. The Chicago Manual of Style often makes an exception for the Bible itself, allowing it to be listed in the bibliography if it is central to the argument or if a specific edition is being used.

For a typical bibliography entry of the Bible, you would include the version or translation used. For example, a bibliography entry might look like: The Holy Bible, New International Version. In notes, if you are referring to the Bible generally, no entry may be necessary. However, if you are citing a specific passage from a particular translation that you wish to highlight, it can be included in the note.

Specific Elements of Scripture Citation

When constructing a scripture citation, several key pieces of information must be included for accuracy. These elements ensure that the reader can precisely identify the referenced text. The primary components are the book name, chapter number, and verse number. The order and formatting of these elements are critical to adhering to Chicago style guidelines.

The book name should be abbreviated according to the standard list mentioned previously. Following the book name, a period is placed. Then comes the chapter number, followed by a colon, and then the verse number(s). For example, a reference to the entire first chapter of Psalms would be rendered as Ps. 1. A reference to a specific verse, such as Psalm 23, verse 1, would be Ps. 23:1. When citing a range of verses, the hyphen is used: Ps. 23:1-3.

Handling Chapter and Verse References

The system for chapter and verse referencing is consistent across most biblical texts. The chapter number precedes the verse(s), separated by a colon. This format is universally understood within biblical studies and related fields. It is crucial to ensure that no extra spaces or punctuation interfere with this standard notation. The precision in these numbers is what allows for the verification of your citations and the accurate retrieval of the intended biblical content.

For more complex references, such as citing multiple verses within a chapter or passages that span across chapters, specific conventions apply. For instance, citing verses 1, 5, and 10 of Chapter 15 of Isaiah would be written as Isa. 15:1, 5, 10. When a passage extends across chapters, such as from the end of chapter 5 to the beginning of chapter 6 of John, it would be cited as John 5:39-6:1. These nuanced notations ensure complete accuracy.

Citing Old and New Testaments

While the core principles of citation remain the same for both the Old and New Testaments, it is important to use the correct abbreviations for each book. The list of abbreviations provided by CMOS covers all books of the Christian Bible, irrespective of whether they belong to the Old Testament or the New Testament. Ensure that you are using the precise abbreviation for each specific book you reference.

For example, the abbreviations for the first book of the Old Testament, Genesis, is Gen., while the abbreviation for the first book of the New Testament, Matthew, is Matt. Similarly, the abbreviation for Revelation, the final book of the New Testament, is Rev. The consistent application of these abbreviations is key to maintaining the integrity of your citations.

Handling Different Bible Versions and Translations

One of the most critical aspects of citing scripture is acknowledging the specific version or translation of the Bible used. Different translations can render passages in subtly or significantly different ways, which can impact the interpretation of the text. Therefore, it is imperative to clearly indicate which version you are consulting.

In footnote or endnote citations, the first time a passage is referenced, you should include the version of the Bible used. For subsequent citations of the same passage from the same version, the version can be omitted for brevity. In the bibliography, if the Bible is included, the full name of the translation should be provided.

Specifying the Bible Translation in Notes

When citing scripture in a note, it is good practice to include the translation. This can be done in a few ways, depending on whether the translation is already mentioned in the text or if it is the first citation of a specific verse. For example, a first-time citation might look like: The New Revised Standard Version Bible (NRSV) states, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). This provides both the full name and the abbreviation for the translation.

If you have already established the translation being used earlier in your work, you can omit it in subsequent notes. For instance, if you have consistently used the NRSV, a subsequent citation might simply be: Gen. 1:1. However, if you are switching translations mid-work or if the translation is not obvious from the context, always re-specify it for clarity.

Including Translations in the Bibliography

As mentioned, while scripture itself is often not listed in a bibliography, specific editions or translations are. This is particularly important if the translation you are using has specific scholarly annotations or introductions, or if the translation itself is a subject of discussion in your work. The format for a bibliography entry for the Bible typically includes the title, the translator(s) or editor(s) if applicable, and publication information.

A common format for a bibliography entry of a specific Bible translation is: The Holy Bible, New International Version. If you are citing a specific annotated edition, it would be formatted more like a book: Author of introduction/commentary, ed. Title of Bible Edition. Place of publication: Publisher, Year. For example: Ehrman, Bart D., ed. The Orthodox Study Bible. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002.

Citing Other Sacred Texts

The principles of citing scripture extend beyond the Christian Bible to encompass other religious and sacred texts, such as the Quran, the Bhagavad Gita, the Talmud, and various Buddhist sutras. The Chicago Manual of Style provides general guidelines for these texts, emphasizing consistency and clarity. While specific abbreviations may not always be standardized as they are for the Bible, the underlying structure of citation remains similar: identification of the text, followed by its divisions.

For texts that have canonical divisions like surahs and verses (Quran) or chapters and verses (other texts), these divisions should be clearly indicated. If the text is widely known by a specific title or abbreviation within its scholarly tradition, it is advisable to use that convention, provided it is explained to the reader. The key is to make the referenced passage easily locatable by your audience.

Quranic Citations

Citing the Quran typically involves referencing the Surah number and the Ayah (verse) number. The standard format is Surah:Ayah. For example, a citation might appear as Quran 2:153. It is important to use the commonly accepted English names or transliterations of the Surahs and to ensure the verse numbering is accurate according to the version you are consulting. If you are using a specific translation, it should be noted, especially on the first reference.

Other Religious Texts

For other sacred texts, such as the Vedas, Upanishads, or the Torah (as distinct from the biblical book of Deuteronomy), the citation method will depend on the conventional scholarly practice for that particular text. Often, these texts are divided into books, chapters, sections, or verses. The goal is to provide enough information to pinpoint the exact location of the quote or reference. For instance, a citation from the Bhagavad Gita might include the chapter number and the verse number within that chapter, formatted as Bhagavad Gita X.YY, where X is the chapter and YY is the verse.

Integrating Scripture Citations into Your Writing

Seamlessly integrating scripture citations into your written work is essential for maintaining a professional and scholarly tone. Avoid abruptly inserting quotes without context. Instead, introduce the scripture passage, explain its relevance to your argument, and then provide the citation. The Chicago Manual of Style encourages this contextual approach to scholarship.

When quoting scripture, use quotation marks for shorter passages and block quotes for longer ones. Ensure that the quoted text is accurate and that the citation immediately follows the quote or paraphrase. The placement of the citation is generally after the closing quotation mark, but before the punctuation of the sentence if the quote ends the sentence.

Quoting Scripture Passages

When quoting scripture directly, it is crucial to ensure absolute fidelity to the source text. Any deviations, even minor ones, should be indicated using standard editorial conventions such as ellipses (...) for omissions or brackets ([...]) for additions or modifications. The primary objective is to present the source material accurately and transparently. Using quotation marks for direct quotes is standard practice, while longer passages may be formatted as block quotes, indented from the main text.

Paraphrasing and Summarizing Scripture

Even when paraphrasing or summarizing scripture, a citation is still required. This demonstrates that you are drawing upon a specific source and allows your readers to consult the original text if they wish. The citation for a paraphrase or summary follows the same rules as for a direct quote, placed after the paraphrased content. The clarity of your citation helps readers follow your line of reasoning and verify your interpretation of the scripture.

Resources for Further Guidance

The Chicago Manual of Style itself is the ultimate authority on citation practices. It is highly recommended to consult the latest edition of The Chicago Manual of Style for the most up-to-date and comprehensive guidelines. Many academic institutions and publishers also provide specific style guides that may supplement or slightly adapt CMOS principles for their particular needs.

Online resources, such as university writing centers and reputable style guide websites, can also offer valuable assistance. However, always cross-reference information with the official manual to ensure accuracy and adherence to established scholarly standards when citing scripture.

The Chicago Manual of Style Online

For those who frequently engage with Chicago style, The Chicago Manual of Style Online is an invaluable resource. It provides searchable access to the entire manual, allowing for quick lookups of specific rules and examples. This digital version is regularly updated, ensuring you are always working with the most current guidelines. It is an indispensable tool for anyone serious about mastering academic citation.

University Writing Centers and Style Guides

Many universities offer writing center services that provide expert guidance on citation and academic writing. These centers often have librarians and tutors knowledgeable in various style guides, including Chicago. Additionally, many academic departments or journals publish their own style sheets, which may offer specific directives on how to cite scripture within their field. Always check for these departmental or journal-specific guidelines if applicable to your work.

Q: How should I cite the Bible in a footnote according to the Chicago Manual for Citing Scripture?

A: According to the Chicago Manual of Style, the first time you cite a passage of scripture in a footnote, you should include the translation used, followed by the book, chapter, and verse. For subsequent citations of the same passage from the same translation, you can use a shortened form that includes only the book, chapter, and verse.

Q: Do I need to include the Bible in my bibliography when using the Chicago Manual for Citing Scripture?

A: Generally, the Bible itself is not included in a bibliography unless a specific edition, commentary, or translation is being discussed or is central to your argument. If you are referencing a particular translation that you wish to acknowledge in your bibliography, you would list it with its full title and publication information.

Q: What is the correct abbreviation format for biblical books in Chicago style?

A: The Chicago Manual of Style provides a standardized list of abbreviations for biblical books. These abbreviations are typically used in both notes and the bibliography and are applied consistently. For example, Genesis is abbreviated as Gen., and John is abbreviated as John.

Q: How do I cite scripture in Chicago style if I am paraphrasing or summarizing a passage?

A: Even when paraphrasing or summarizing scripture, you are still required to provide a citation according to Chicago style. The citation should follow the paraphrased or summarized content and include the same information as a direct quote: book, chapter, and verse.

Q: Can I use different translations of the Bible in the same paper when following Chicago style?

A: While it is generally best to maintain consistency by using a single translation throughout your work, if you must use multiple translations, you must clearly indicate which translation you are using for each scripture reference, especially on the first citation of a passage from each translation.

Q: How do I cite the Quran using Chicago style guidelines?

A: For the Quran, Chicago style typically requires citing the Surah number and the Ayah (verse) number. The format is usually Surah:Ayah (e.g., Quran 2:153). It is important to note the translation used, especially on the first reference.

Q: What if I am citing a very specific annotated edition of the Bible? How does Chicago style handle that?

A: If you are citing a specific annotated edition of the Bible, you would treat it more like a book citation. You would include the editor(s) or author(s) of the annotations, the title of the annotated edition, and the publication details, in addition to the standard scripture reference.

Q: Is there a difference in how the Chicago Manual for Citing Scripture handles Old Testament and New Testament books?

A: The core citation format for Old and New Testament books is the same. The main difference lies in using the correct, standardized abbreviations for each specific book, whether it belongs to the Old Testament or the New Testament.

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