

chicago manual of style bibliography examples for government citation

chicago manual of style bibliography examples for government citation is a crucial aspect of academic and professional writing, ensuring that sources are accurately and consistently credited. Navigating the intricacies of citing government documents, whether they are reports, legislation, regulations, or statistical data, requires a thorough understanding of the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) guidelines. This comprehensive guide will delve into the specific formatting and citation requirements for various types of government publications, offering clear examples to aid writers in their bibliographic entries. We will explore how to cite federal, state, and local government sources, paying close attention to the nuances of different document types and their respective citation elements. Understanding these examples is key to maintaining academic integrity and providing readers with the necessary information to locate your sources.

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Understanding the Basics of Government Citations in CMOS

The Chicago Manual of Style, 17th edition, provides detailed guidance on how to cite a wide array of sources, and government documents are no exception. The fundamental principle behind any citation is to provide enough information for a reader to locate the original source. For government documents, this often involves identifying the issuing agency, the title of the document, the date of publication, and specific identifiers like report numbers or session laws.

When constructing a bibliography entry for a government document, several key components typically need to be included. These generally encompass the author (which is often the government agency itself), the title of the publication, the publishing body (if different from the author), the place of publication, the date, and any relevant series or report numbers. The specific order and formatting of these elements can vary depending on the type of government document being cited, making it essential to consult specific examples for accuracy.

Citing Federal Government Publications

Federal government publications are a vast category, encompassing everything from congressional reports to executive agency documents and statistical data. The primary challenge often lies in identifying the correct authoring agency and the specific title of the publication. In CMOS, the author is typically the department or agency responsible for the document. If a specific office or individual within an agency authored the report, that can also be specified.

Congressional Publications

Congressional publications, such as committee reports, hearings, and congressional debates, have specific citation formats. For instance, a committee report would generally include the committee name, the bill number it relates to (if applicable), the title of the report, and the Congress and session in which it was published. Hearings are similar, often including the committee, the subject of the hearing, and the date it was held.

Example:

- United States. Congress. House. Committee on the Judiciary. *Oversight of the Department of Justice: Hearing Before the Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives*. 117th Cong., 1st sess., October 26, 2021.

Executive Agency Publications

Documents produced by executive branch agencies, such as the Department of Health and Human Services or the Environmental Protection Agency, follow a similar pattern. The agency is listed as the author, followed by the title of the report or publication, the date, and any relevant series or publication numbers. When citing statistical data from an agency like the Bureau of Labor Statistics, you would focus on the specific report or table title and the date of its release.

Example:

- National Archives and Records Administration. *Guide to Federal Government Information*. Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 2019.

Citing State and Local Government Publications

Citing state and local government documents involves the same principles as federal documents, but with a focus on the relevant state or municipal entity. The author will be the specific state department, commission, or local government body. Titles, dates, and any specific identifiers remain crucial for accurate citation. For instance, a report from a state's Department of Transportation would follow a format reflecting that agency and state.

State Agency Reports

Reports issued by state agencies, such as departments of education, environmental protection, or transportation, are cited by the agency name, followed by the report title, publication date, and any specific series information. It is important to clearly indicate the state to avoid confusion with similarly named agencies in other states.

Example:

- California. Department of Fish and Wildlife. *California Endangered Species Act Biennial Report*. Sacramento: California Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2022.

Local Government Documents

Local government documents, including city council minutes, county reports, or municipal planning documents, are cited similarly. The name of the city or county, followed by the specific department or body, serves as the author. The title, date, and any relevant meeting or document number are then provided.

Example:

- City of Chicago. Department of Planning and Development. *Chicago Zoning Ordinance Update: Proposed Revisions*. Chicago: City of Chicago, 2023.

Citing Government Legislation and Regulations

Legislation and regulations represent a distinct category of government documents that require specific citation methods within CMOS. These include

federal laws, presidential proclamations, executive orders, and administrative regulations published in sources like the Federal Register or the Code of Federal Regulations.

Federal Legislation

Federal statutes are typically cited by their public law number and the year enacted, or by their codified chapter in the United States Statutes at Large. For example, a bill passed by Congress would be referenced by its Public Law designation.

Example:

- Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Public Law 111-148, 124 Stat. 119 (2010).

Federal Regulations

Regulations are usually found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). Citations to regulations in the CFR include the title number, part number, and section number, followed by the abbreviation "CFR" and the year of the edition. If the regulation was initially published in the Federal Register, that citation can also be included.

Example:

- 40 CFR § 158.1450 (2023).

Citing Government Websites and Online Resources

In the digital age, many government documents are accessed online, requiring specific attention to how these web-based resources are cited. When citing a government website, the author (usually the agency), the title of the specific page or document, the website name, and the URL are essential. Including a retrieval date is also recommended for online sources, as web content can change.

Agency Websites

When referencing information directly from a government agency's website, treat the agency as the author and the specific page title as the work's

title. If there is no clear author or title, you may need to describe the content.

Example:

- United States. Department of Commerce. "About Us." Bureau of Economic Analysis, last modified October 15, 2023. <https://www.bea.gov/about>.

Online Government Databases

Government databases, such as those providing census data or economic statistics, should be cited by the name of the database or the responsible agency, followed by the title of the data set or report, and the URL. Again, the retrieval date is important.

Example:

- United States. Census Bureau. "2020 Census Redistricting Data Summary File." Accessed October 26, 2023.
<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2020/dec/2020-redistricting-data.html>
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Common Challenges and Best Practices for Government Citations

One of the most frequent challenges in citing government documents is determining the correct authoring entity. Government agencies often have complex organizational structures, with multiple bureaus, offices, and divisions. It is crucial to identify the most specific body that produced the document. Additionally, the publication date can sometimes be ambiguous, especially for older documents or those published irregularly.

Best practices include maintaining a meticulous record of all government documents consulted, including their full bibliographic details. When in doubt, it is always advisable to consult the latest edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* or to seek guidance from a librarian or academic writing center. Consistency in citation format, regardless of the complexity of the source, is paramount for academic rigor and clarity.

Ensuring Accuracy and Completeness

To ensure accuracy and completeness in your bibliography, always double-check that all necessary elements are present: author (agency), title, publication details (place, publisher, date), and any identifying numbers or URLs. For legislation, ensure the correct public law or statute citation is used. For regulations, verify the title, part, and section numbers in the CFR. If citing from a physical document, use the imprint information. For online sources, confirm the URL is active and the retrieval date is current.

By meticulously following these guidelines and using the provided examples, writers can confidently create accurate and compliant Chicago Manual of Style bibliographies for government citations, enhancing the credibility and accessibility of their research.

FAQ

Q: What is the most common author for a government citation in Chicago style?

A: The most common author for a government citation in Chicago style is the government agency or department responsible for publishing the document. This can range from federal bodies like the Department of State to state agencies or local municipal departments.

Q: How do I cite a government report with no clear authoring agency?

A: If a government report lacks a clearly identifiable authoring agency, you may use the title of the report as the first element in your citation, followed by the publication details. However, it is always best to try and locate the issuing body, even if it's at the bottom of the document or on the cover page.

Q: What information is essential when citing federal legislation in CMOS?

A: When citing federal legislation in CMOS, it is essential to include the common name of the act, the Public Law number, the volume and page number of the United States Statutes at Large where it is published, and the year of enactment.

Q: How should I cite a regulation found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)?

A: To cite a regulation in the CFR, you need to provide the title number, the part number, the section number, the abbreviation "CFR," and the year of the CFR edition. For example: 40 CFR § 158.1450 (2023).

Q: Is a retrieval date always necessary for government websites cited in CMOS?

A: While not always strictly mandatory for stable government websites, it is highly recommended to include a retrieval date for any online government resource. This is because web content can be updated or removed without notice, and the retrieval date helps readers locate the exact version you accessed.

Q: How does the Chicago Manual of Style handle state government reports differently from federal reports?

A: The fundamental principles for citing state government reports are similar to federal reports. The key difference lies in identifying the specific state and its corresponding agency or department as the author. For instance, instead of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, you might cite the "California Department of Food and Agriculture."

Q: What if I find a government document with both an agency and an individual author listed?

A: If a government document lists both an agency and an individual author, CMOS generally prefers to list the individual as the author, followed by their affiliation with the agency. However, for official reports where the agency is the primary entity responsible, the agency might be listed as the author. Always check the document's presentation and follow the most logical attribution.

Q: Can I cite a government press release found online?

A: Yes, you can cite a government press release found online. Treat the issuing agency as the author, the title of the press release as the work's title, and include the name of the website (e.g., the agency's official site), the URL, and the retrieval date.

Q: How do I cite a treaty or international agreement issued by the government?

A: Citing government-issued treaties or international agreements typically involves including the treaty title, the parties involved, the date of signing or ratification, and the source where it can be found (e.g., a treaty series or official government publication). CMOS provides specific guidance for these international documents.

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