

chicago manual of style citing images

Mastering Chicago Manual of Style Citing Images: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago manual of style citing images requires meticulous attention to detail to ensure academic integrity and proper attribution. Whether you are a student, researcher, or publisher, understanding how to correctly cite visual materials is paramount. This comprehensive guide will navigate you through the intricacies of the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) for image citations, covering both notes and bibliography formats. We will explore the essential components of an image citation, address common challenges like artwork, photographs, and figures, and provide clear examples to demystify the process. Adhering to these guidelines will not only enhance the credibility of your work but also respect the intellectual property rights of creators.

Table of Contents

- Understanding the Fundamentals of Image Citation in CMOS
- Notes and Bibliography System for Citing Images
- The Author-Date System for Citing Images
- Key Elements of a Chicago Style Image Citation
- Citing Different Types of Visual Materials
- Special Considerations for Image Citation
- Placement and Formatting of Image Citations
- Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Understanding the Fundamentals of Image Citation in CMOS

The Chicago Manual of Style provides two primary citation systems: the notes and bibliography system and the author-date system. Both systems require thorough documentation when incorporating images into academic or professional work. The core principle behind citing images is to provide enough information for your reader to locate the original source of the visual material. This means identifying the creator, the title of the work, the date of creation, and crucially, where the image was accessed or published.

Ignoring proper citation for images can lead to accusations of plagiarism, even if unintentional. Visuals are not exempt from copyright and intellectual property laws. Therefore, a robust understanding of how to attribute them correctly within the Chicago style framework is essential for any writer engaging with visual content. This section lays the groundwork for the detailed discussions that follow, emphasizing the importance of consistency and accuracy.

Notes and Bibliography System for Citing Images

The notes and bibliography system is widely used in the humanities and involves footnotes or endnotes for in-text citations, followed by a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the work. When citing an image using this system, the initial citation in a note will be more detailed than subsequent citations of the same source.

In-Text Notes for Images

The first time an image is referenced in your text, you will provide a full citation in a footnote or endnote. This note should include the artist/creator, title of the work, date of creation, medium, dimensions (if relevant and available), the institution or collection where it is housed, and the source where you found or accessed the image (e.g., a book, website, or exhibition catalog). For images accessed online, include the URL and access date.

Subsequent citations of the same image in notes will be shortened, often including just the creator's last name, a shortened title, and the page number or note number where it appears. This streamlines the referencing process while still allowing readers to trace the source.

Bibliography Entries for Images

The bibliography entry for an image should be more comprehensive than a footnote or endnote and will follow a standardized format. It typically begins with the creator's name, followed by the title of the artwork or photograph in italics. If the image is part of a larger collection or publication, you will then cite that source. Key details such as the date of creation, medium, dimensions, ownership information, and publication details are crucial. For online sources, the website name, URL, and access date are required.

The goal of the bibliography is to provide a complete bibliographic record for every source cited in your notes. This ensures that readers can easily locate all the materials you have consulted, including the visual ones.

The Author-Date System for Citing Images

The author-date system, commonly used in the sciences and social sciences, relies on parenthetical in-text citations that include the author's last name and the year of publication, followed by a reference list at the end of the work. Citing images in this system requires similar information but formatted according to author-date conventions.

In-Text Citations for Images (Author-Date)

In the author-date system, you will typically provide a brief parenthetical citation directly in the text, usually immediately after the image or the mention of it. This would typically include the creator's last name and the year the image was created or published. For example, (Smith 2020). If the image is being discussed in relation to a specific publication, you might include a page number or figure number, such as (Jones 2019, fig. 3).

Reference List Entries for Images (Author-Date)

The reference list entry for an image in the author-date system will contain essential information to identify and locate the source. It generally starts with the creator's last name, followed by their first name. Then, the year of creation or publication is provided. The title of the image or artwork is italicized. If the image is part of a larger work (like a book or journal article), that information follows, including the title of the larger work, volume and issue numbers, page numbers, and publisher. For online sources, the website name, URL, and access date are mandatory.

The reference list serves as the complete inventory of all sources cited in your paper, allowing readers to find the original materials. Accuracy in transcribing details is critical for the effectiveness of this system.

Key Elements of a Chicago Style Image Citation

Regardless of which CMOS system you employ, certain fundamental pieces of information are consistently required for a complete image citation. These elements ensure that your reader can identify, locate, and verify the visual material you have used.

- **Creator/Artist:** The individual or entity responsible for creating the image. This is usually the artist's name for artwork or the photographer's name for photographs.
- **Title of the Work:** The official title of the artwork, photograph, illustration, or other visual element. This should be italicized.
- **Date of Creation:** The year or period when the image was created. If an exact date is unknown, use an approximate date or "n.d." (no date).
- **Medium:** The materials used to create the image (e.g., oil on canvas, digital photograph, watercolor).
- **Dimensions:** The height and width of the artwork or photograph, usually in inches or centimeters. This is particularly important for original artworks.

- **Institution or Collection:** For original artworks or photographs, indicate where the work is housed (e.g., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Private Collection of John Doe).
- **Publication/Access Source:** This is the most crucial part when citing from secondary sources. It includes the book title, journal title, website name, exhibition catalog, or other publication where you found the image.
- **Page Number/Figure Number:** The specific location of the image within the publication or website.
- **URL and Access Date:** Essential for images accessed online, providing the web address and the date you viewed it.

Citing Different Types of Visual Materials

The specific details required for an image citation can vary depending on the nature of the visual material. Chicago style offers guidance for common types of images, but the underlying principle of providing sufficient information remains constant.

Artwork and Photographs

For original artworks and photographs, the citation will focus on the creator, title, date, medium, dimensions, and current location. If you are citing a reproduction of artwork found in a book or online, the citation will shift to prioritize the publication or website as the source, while still acknowledging the original creator and title.

Example (Notes and Bibliography - First Note):

1. Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, c. 1503–1506, oil on poplar panel, 77 cm × 53 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris. Accessed via www.louvre.fr (accessed September 15, 2023).

Example (Notes and Bibliography - Bibliography):

Da Vinci, Leonardo. *Mona Lisa*. c. 1503–1506. Oil on poplar panel, 77 cm × 53 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Accessed via www.louvre.fr (accessed September 15, 2023).

Figures and Illustrations from Publications

When citing a figure or illustration from a book, journal, or other publication, the citation should direct the reader to that specific source. The creator of the figure might be the author of the publication, a separate illustrator, or even an organization. The title of the figure itself, if it has one, is important, along with its location within the larger work.

Example (Notes and Bibliography - First Note):

2. "Diagram of Photosynthesis," illustration by Jane Doe, in *Principles of Biology*, 3rd ed. (New York: Academic Press, 2022), 115.

Example (Notes and Bibliography - Bibliography):

Doe, Jane. "Diagram of Photosynthesis." In *Principles of Biology*, 3rd ed., 115. New York: Academic Press, 2022.

Images from Websites

Citing images from websites is increasingly common. The citation should include the creator (if known), the title of the image, the name of the website, the URL, and the date of access. If the website provides a copyright holder or creator for the image, that information should also be included.

Example (Notes and Bibliography - First Note):

3. "National Park Service Ranger at Sunset," photograph by John Smith, National Park Service, January 10, 2023, www.nps.gov/images/sunset-ranger.jpg (accessed September 15, 2023).

Example (Notes and Bibliography - Bibliography):

Smith, John. "National Park Service Ranger at Sunset." Photograph. National Park Service. January 10, 2023. Accessed September 15, 2023.
www.nps.gov/images/sunset-ranger.jpg.

Special Considerations for Image Citation

Beyond the standard elements, several special circumstances require careful attention to ensure compliance with Chicago style and copyright law.

Copyright and Permissions

It is crucial to understand that using an image does not automatically grant you permission to publish or reproduce it. You must respect copyright laws. If you are using an image for anything other than private study or fair use, you may need to obtain permission from the copyright holder. Your citation should reflect that you have done so, and some publications may require a statement of permission in your caption or introductory text.

Attribution Requirements from Image Providers

Some image providers, such as stock photo agencies or museums, have specific attribution requirements that must be met in addition to or as part of your Chicago style citation. Always check the terms of use for any image you source, especially if it is from a repository like Getty Images, Unsplash, or a museum's digital collection.

Images Created by You

If you have created the image yourself (e.g., a chart, graph, or photograph), you still need to cite it appropriately, especially if it is for a formal academic paper or publication. You would typically refer to it as "Author's own photograph" or "Author's illustration" and provide a brief description of when and how it was created.

Placement and Formatting of Image Citations

The location and formatting of your image citations are as important as the content of the citation itself. CMOS provides clear guidelines for where captions and citations should appear.

Captions for Images

Images in academic and professional writing are almost always accompanied by captions. A caption is a brief descriptive text that appears directly below the image. For Chicago style, a common practice is to label the image (e.g., "Figure 1," "Plate 2") and then provide a concise description of the image, followed by the full citation information or a shortened reference pointing to a note or bibliography entry.

The caption should include the artist/creator, title, date, and the source from which the image was obtained. If using the notes and bibliography system, the caption might simply include the figure number and a brief descriptive title, with the full citation appearing in a corresponding footnote or endnote. For the author-date system, the caption would typically include a parenthetical citation directly within or immediately following the descriptive text.

Where Citations Appear

In the notes and bibliography system, the full citation for an image appears in a footnote or endnote. The caption itself might contain a brief identifier (e.g., "Fig. 1"). In the bibliography, a complete entry is provided for every image cited in the notes.

In the author-date system, the citation typically appears parenthetically within the text when the image is discussed, or it can be incorporated into the caption itself. The reference list at the end of the document provides the full bibliographic details for each image.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Navigating the specifics of citing images can be challenging, and several common mistakes can lead to inaccuracies or incomplete citations.

- **Omitting Essential Information:** Failing to include key details like the creator, title, date, or source can render a citation useless.
- **Inconsistent Formatting:** Mixing elements from different citation styles or inconsistently applying the Chicago style rules for capitalization, punctuation, and italics can confuse readers.
- **Misattributing Ownership or Creation:** Incorrectly identifying the artist, photographer, or copyright holder is a serious error.
- **Failing to Verify URLs:** Using broken or incorrect URLs for online images means readers cannot access the source.
- **Ignoring Copyright and Permissions:** Assuming that finding an image online means it is free to use is a significant legal and ethical oversight.
- **Over-reliance on Image Search Engines:** While search engines are useful for finding images, they are not reliable sources for citation. Always try to trace the image back to its original creator and publication.

By carefully reviewing and adhering to the guidelines outlined in the Chicago Manual of Style, you can confidently and correctly cite all visual materials used in your work, ensuring academic rigor and respect for intellectual property.

Q: What is the primary difference between citing an image in the notes-bibliography system versus the author-date system in Chicago style?

A: The primary difference lies in the in-text citation method and the organization of the reference list. In the notes-bibliography system, in-text citations are full or shortened footnotes/endnotes, with a comprehensive bibliography at the end. In the author-date system, in-text citations are parenthetical (author, year), and the final list is called a reference list, containing full entries for all cited sources.

Q: Do I need to cite an image if I took the photograph myself?

A: Yes, even if you created the image yourself, it is good practice to cite it, especially in formal academic work. You would typically indicate that it is an "Author's photograph" or "Author's illustration" and specify when and how it was created, often including it as an appendix or in a caption.

Q: How do I cite an image found on social media platforms like Instagram or Twitter?

A: Citing images from social media requires careful attention to the platform and the creator. You should include the creator's username, the title of the post (if any), the date of the post, the name of the platform, and the URL. If the creator is an individual, their name should be used if known, otherwise the username.

Q: What information is absolutely essential for citing any image in Chicago style?

A: The most critical elements are the creator (artist, photographer, etc.), the title of the work, the date of creation, and the source where you accessed or found the image. For online images, the URL and access date are also indispensable.

Q: How should I handle images where the creator or date is unknown?

A: If the creator is unknown, you start the citation with the title of the work. If the date is unknown, you can use "n.d." (no date). However, it is important to try your best to find this information from reputable sources before resorting to "unknown" or "n.d."

Q: Does Chicago style require me to get permission to use an image?

A: Chicago style itself does not mandate obtaining copyright permissions; however, it strongly emphasizes respecting copyright laws and intellectual property rights. You are responsible for understanding and adhering to copyright regulations. If you are publishing the work, you will likely need to secure permissions and may need to state this in your publication.

Q: How do I cite a cropped or modified version of an image?

A: If you have significantly modified or cropped an image, you should note this. You can indicate it in the caption or accompanying text, for example, "Image cropped by author".

from the original." Your citation should still point to the original source of the image.

Q: What is the difference between a figure number and a plate number in image citations?

A: A figure number (e.g., Figure 1, Fig. 2) is typically used for illustrations, diagrams, charts, and photographs within the main text of a document. A plate number (e.g., Plate I, Plate 2) is often used for artistic works, particularly when they are grouped together in a separate section, often at the beginning or end of a book.

[Chicago Manual Of Style Citing Images](#)

Chicago Manual Of Style Citing Images

Related Articles

- [chicago manual of style footnotes for audiovisual materials examples](#)
- [chicago manual of style figure placement in academic papers](#)
- [chicago manual of style editing standards online](#)

[Back to Home](#)