

chicago manual of style figure citation examples

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Mastering Chicago Manual of Style Figure Citation Examples in Chicago Style

chicago manual of style figure citation examples chicago style demands precision, especially when it comes to integrating and citing visual elements like figures, tables, and illustrations. Properly crediting sources for these visual aids is not merely a matter of academic integrity; it's crucial for clarity, credibility, and avoiding potential copyright issues. This comprehensive guide delves into the intricacies of citing figures according to the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS), offering detailed examples and best practices applicable to scholarly works, theses, dissertations, and any document adhering to this widely respected citation system. We will explore the nuances of both footnote/endnote and author-date systems, addressing common challenges and providing clear, actionable advice. Understanding how to effectively cite figures in Chicago style ensures your work is both authoritative and compliant.

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Understanding the Importance of Figure Citations

Accurate citation of figures in Chicago style is paramount for several compelling reasons. Firstly, it acknowledges the intellectual property of the original creator, respecting copyright and preventing plagiarism. Failing to properly attribute a figure can lead to accusations of academic dishonesty, which can have severe consequences. Secondly, it provides readers with the necessary information to locate the original source if they wish to consult it further or verify the information presented. This transparency enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of your own research and analysis. Moreover, correctly formatted citations demonstrate a professional approach to scholarship and adherence to established academic standards.

In academic writing, figures often play a crucial role in conveying complex data, illustrating theories, or presenting visual evidence that cannot be adequately described in text alone. Therefore, their accurate sourcing is as vital as the citation of any textual quote or idea. The Chicago Manual of Style provides a robust framework for ensuring these visual elements are integrated seamlessly and ethically into your work, bolstering the overall quality and integrity of your manuscript. Whether you are using photographs, charts, maps, or diagrams, the principles of proper citation remain consistent.

Key Elements of a Chicago Style Figure Citation

When citing a figure in Chicago style, several key pieces of information are typically required to construct a complete and accurate citation. These elements help readers identify the exact source of the visual material. The specific components may vary slightly depending on the source type (e.g., a book, a journal article, a website), but the core information remains consistent. Understanding these components is the first step toward mastering figure citations.

The essential elements generally include:

- Author(s) or Creator(s) of the figure
- Title of the work from which the figure is taken

- Publication information (publisher, place of publication, year for books; journal title, volume, issue, year for articles)
- Page number or figure number where the figure appears
- URL or DOI if accessed online
- Brief description or caption of the figure itself, if not directly provided by the source

Author and Creator Identification

Identifying the author or creator of the figure is a critical first step. In many cases, the creator of the figure is the same as the author of the work. However, this is not always true. For instance, a book might feature illustrations or photographs created by a different individual or entity than the author of the text. In such instances, it is important to identify the creator of the visual element specifically, if known and relevant to the citation.

For figures created by a single individual, their name should be listed as the author. If the figure is a product of a corporate body or organization, that entity's name serves as the author. For works where authorship is unknown, the citation may begin with the title of the work.

Title and Publication Details

The title of the work containing the figure is essential for identification. This could be the title of a book, a chapter, a journal article, or a webpage. Following the title, complete publication details are necessary. For books, this includes the publisher, place of publication, and the year of publication. For journal articles, it requires the journal title, volume number, issue number, and publication year, along

with the page range where the article appears.

When citing figures from online sources, the URL or DOI (Digital Object Identifier) is crucial. This allows readers to access the original source directly. It is also good practice to include an access date for online materials, especially if the content is subject to change.

Placement and Description

The citation must also specify precisely where the figure can be found within the source material. This typically involves noting the figure number (e.g., Figure 1, Fig. 3.2) and the page number(s) on which it appears. If the figure does not have a formal number, a descriptive phrase followed by the page number may suffice.

In some cases, you might need to provide a brief descriptive caption of the figure itself, especially if the figure is not self-explanatory or if the original source lacks a detailed title or caption. This caption should accurately reflect the content of the visual aid.

Footnote and Endnote System for Figure Citations

The footnote and endnote system in Chicago style requires a full bibliographic citation the first time a source is referenced, followed by a shortened form for subsequent citations. When citing a figure, this principle applies. The initial note should be comprehensive, allowing readers to locate the source with ease. Subsequent notes can be more concise, referring back to the initial citation.

For figures reproduced from a book, the first footnote might look something like this:

1. Jane Doe, *The Art of Illustration* (New York: Art Press, 2020), fig. 5, 112.

A subsequent note for the same figure would be shortened:

2. Doe, *Art of Illustration*, fig. 5, 112.

First-Time Footnote/Endnote Citation of a Book Figure

When you encounter a figure within a book and need to cite it for the first time using the footnote/endnote method, construct a note that includes all necessary details. The author's full name, the book's title (*italicized*), the city of publication, the publisher, the year of publication, and specific location information for the figure (e.g., figure number and page number) are all vital. Ensure correct punctuation and capitalization as per Chicago style guidelines.

Consider a scenario where a figure is found on page 85 of a book titled "Visualizing Data" by John Smith, published in 2022 by Data Publishers in Chicago. The first footnote would appear as:

1. John Smith, *Visualizing Data* (Chicago: Data Publishers, 2022), fig. 2.1, 85.

Subsequent Footnote/Endnote Citations

After the initial, full citation in a footnote or endnote, all subsequent references to that same source and figure can be abbreviated. This shortened form typically includes the author's last name, a shortened version of the title (if necessary to distinguish from other works by the same author), and the specific location of the figure. The goal is brevity without sacrificing clarity.

Continuing the example above, if you refer to the same figure again later in your text, the subsequent footnote would be:

2. Smith, *Visualizing Data*, fig. 2.1, 85.

If the author has multiple works cited, including the shortened title is crucial. If the author has only one

work cited, you might even be able to omit the title in subsequent notes, depending on the context, but it is generally safer to include it.

Citing Figures from Journal Articles (Footnotes/Endnotes)

Citing figures from journal articles follows a similar principle, but with different publication details. The first footnote will include the author of the article, the article title (in quotation marks), the journal title (italicized), volume and issue numbers, year, and the page range of the article, along with the figure's specific location.

Example:

3. Emily Carter, "The Evolution of Cartography," *Journal of Geographical Studies* 45, no. 2 (2021): 180, fig. 3, 185.

Subsequent notes would be abbreviated:

4. Carter, "Evolution of Cartography," fig. 3, 185.

Author-Date System for Figure Citations

The author-date system, while less common in humanities disciplines that traditionally favor Chicago style, is also supported by the manual. In this system, parenthetical in-text citations refer to the author and year of publication, and a corresponding reference list at the end of the document provides full bibliographic details. Figure citations in this system mirror the in-text citation format.

When citing a figure from a book in the author-date system, the in-text citation would typically appear parenthetically within or at the end of the sentence discussing the figure.

Example in text:

This remarkable illustration (Doe 2020, fig. 5) showcases the early stages of artistic development.

Or, if the author is mentioned in the text:

As Doe (2020) illustrates, the early stages of artistic development are clearly depicted in Figure 5.

In-Text Citations (Author-Date)

The in-text citation in the author-date system is concise and appears directly within the body of your text. It consists of the author's last name, followed by the year of publication, and any specific locational information for the figure, such as the figure number. This allows readers to quickly identify the source without disrupting the flow of your writing.

For a figure from John Smith's book, *Visualizing Data* (2022), if the figure is labeled 2.1, the in-text citation would be: (Smith 2022, fig. 2.1).

Reference List Entries (Author-Date)

The reference list at the end of your document provides the full bibliographic details for all sources cited in the text. Each entry should correspond to an in-text citation and be alphabetized by the author's last name. For figures from books, the entry would include author, year, title, publication city, publisher, and any specific locational details.

The reference list entry for the Doe example would be:

Doe, Jane. 2020. *The Art of Illustration*. New York: Art Press.

When citing a figure specifically from a journal article in the author-date system, the reference list entry

would include the author, year, article title, journal title, volume and issue numbers, and page range.

Example:

Carter, Emily. 2021. "The Evolution of Cartography." *Journal of Geographical Studies* 45 (2): 175–190.

In the reference list, you would cite the entire article, and the figure number would be noted in the in-text citation as shown previously.

Citing Figures from Different Sources

The Chicago Manual of Style provides guidelines for citing figures from a wide array of sources, each with its own specific requirements. Whether the figure originates from a published book, a scholarly journal, a website, or even an unpublished manuscript, the citation must be clear and informative.

Figures from Websites and Online Databases

Citing figures from online sources requires specific details to ensure verifiability. For figures found on websites, you will need to provide the author (if known), the title of the specific page or image, the name of the website, and the URL. Including the date of publication or last update, and crucially, the date you accessed the material, is also recommended, especially for content that might be altered or removed.

Example (Footnote):

5. "Historical Map of Chicago," accessed May 15, 2023,
https://www.examplewebsite.com/maps/chicago_historical.jpg.

Example (Author-Date Reference List):

"Historical Map of Chicago." n.d. Accessed May 15, 2023.

https://www.examplewebsite.com/maps/chicago_historical.jpg.

Figures from Published Books

As detailed earlier, citing figures from books involves identifying the author of the book, the title, publication details, and the specific location of the figure (figure number and page number). This is a fundamental aspect of academic citation and requires meticulous attention to detail.

Figures from Journal Articles

Journal articles often contain figures that are integral to the research presented. Citing these requires the author(s) of the article, article title, journal title, volume, issue, year, and page range, in addition to the specific figure location within the article. The clarity of these citations aids readers in understanding the context and origin of the visual data.

Figures from Unpublished Works

Citing figures from unpublished materials, such as manuscripts or personal correspondence, requires a slightly different approach. You'll need to describe the nature of the work, its location (e.g., archive name, collection), and any identifying information like a folder or box number. The date of the document is also crucial.

Example (Footnote):

6. Photograph of the Chicago skyline, ca. 1930, John Smith Papers, Box 12, Chicago Historical Society Archives.

General Guidelines for Figure Placement and Labeling

Beyond the citation itself, the Chicago Manual of Style offers guidance on how figures should be presented within a document to ensure clarity and professionalism. Proper labeling and placement are crucial for reader comprehension and for maintaining a consistent academic standard.

Captioning Figures

Every figure in your document should be accompanied by a caption. The caption serves to identify the figure and provide a brief explanation of its content. In Chicago style, figures are typically numbered sequentially (e.g., Figure 1, Figure 2) or by chapter (e.g., Figure 1.1, Figure 1.2). The caption should be placed directly below the figure.

A standard caption format includes:

- The word "Figure" followed by its number.
- A brief, descriptive title or explanation of the figure's content.
- A citation if the figure is not original to your work.

Placement within the Text

Figures should generally be placed as close as possible to the first mention or discussion of them in the text. This allows readers to easily refer to the visual aid while reading the accompanying explanation. If a figure is too large to fit on a page with the text, it can be placed on the following

page, but proximity is key for smooth reading flow.

Integration with Citations

When a figure is borrowed from another source, the citation should be included within or immediately following the caption. This is typically done using either the footnote/endnote system or the author-date system, depending on which is being employed for the rest of the document. Ensure the citation is complete and accurate, referencing the original source of the visual material.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid in Chicago Style Figure Citations

Navigating the complexities of citation can lead to errors if one is not careful. Several common pitfalls can trip up even experienced writers when it comes to citing figures in Chicago style. Awareness of these potential issues can help prevent them.

Inconsistent Citation Style

One of the most frequent mistakes is inconsistency in applying either the footnote/endnote or author-date system throughout the document. It is crucial to choose one system and adhere to it rigorously for all citations, including those for figures. Mixing elements of both systems will confuse readers and deviate from Chicago style standards.

Incomplete Source Information

Failing to include all necessary components of a citation is another common problem. For figures, this

often means omitting the specific figure number, page number, URL, or publication year. This lack of detail makes it difficult, if not impossible, for readers to find the original source, undermining the purpose of citation.

Misattributing Authorship

Sometimes, the creator of a figure is not the author of the text it appears in. Failing to identify the correct creator of the visual element can lead to misattribution. Always verify who is credited with creating the figure if it differs from the author of the main work.

Another pitfall is assuming figures found online are in the public domain and therefore do not require citation. This is rarely the case, and proper attribution is always necessary.

Over-Reliance on Shortened Citations

While shortened citations are used in the footnote/endnote system, it is essential to provide the full, comprehensive citation the first time a source is referenced. Overusing shortened citations from the outset or using them inappropriately can render a citation unhelpful.

Ignoring Copyright and Permissions

Beyond citation, it is vital to remember that using figures from other sources often requires obtaining copyright permission. While Chicago style focuses on how to cite, the ethical and legal implications of reproduction are a separate but equally important consideration for authors.

FAQ

Q: What is the most common mistake when citing figures in Chicago style?

A: The most common mistake is inconsistency in citation style, either by mixing footnote/endnote and author-date systems, or by not providing complete source information for the figure.

Q: Do I need to cite figures that are created by me but based on someone else's data?

A: Yes, even if you create the figure yourself (e.g., a graph), you must cite the original source of the data. The citation should indicate the source of the underlying information.

Q: How do I cite a figure that I found on a personal blog?

A: Cite it like any other online source. Include the author (if known), the title of the post or image, the blog's name, the URL, and the access date. If the author is not identifiable, begin with the title of the post.

Q: Should I cite a figure if I have modified it significantly from the original source?

A: Yes, you must still cite the original source. In addition to the citation, you should clearly indicate that the figure has been modified from the original.

Q: Is there a difference in figure citation format between the footnote/endnote and author–date systems in Chicago style?

A: Yes, there is a difference in how the citation appears in the text and in the bibliography/reference list. Footnotes/endnotes provide full details on first use and shortened forms thereafter, while author–date uses parenthetical in-text citations followed by a full reference list entry.

Q: What if a figure in a book doesn't have a number, only a page number?

A: In such cases, you would cite the page number where the figure appears. For example, instead of "fig. 5," you might use "p. 112."

Q: How do I cite a figure from a government publication in Chicago style?

A: Treat government publications like books or reports, citing the issuing agency as the author, followed by the title, publication details, and the specific location of the figure.

Q: Can I use the same figure citation for multiple figures from the same page?

A: No, each figure should be cited individually, even if they appear on the same page. Specify the exact figure number for each.

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