

chicago manual of style for footnotes

The Chicago Manual of Style is an indispensable guide for academic and professional writers, particularly when it comes to meticulously citing sources. Understanding the Chicago Manual of Style for footnotes is crucial for anyone aiming for clarity, credibility, and adherence to scholarly standards. This comprehensive guide will delve deep into the nuances of footnote creation, from basic formatting to handling complex source types. We will explore the fundamental principles of Chicago style footnotes, differentiating between the two primary citation systems: notes and bibliography, and author-date. Furthermore, this article will provide detailed instructions on formatting various types of sources within footnotes, including books, journal articles, websites, and more, ensuring your citations are accurate and consistent. Mastering these elements is key to avoiding plagiarism and allowing readers to easily locate your referenced material.

Table of Contents

Understanding Chicago Style Footnotes

The Notes and Bibliography System

The Author-Date System

Formatting General Footnote Elements

Footnotes for Books

Footnotes for Journal Articles

Footnotes for Websites and Online Sources

Footnotes for Other Source Types

Common Footnote Errors to Avoid

The Role of the Bibliography in Chicago Style

Understanding Chicago Style Footnotes

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) is a widely respected style guide that offers comprehensive instructions for manuscript preparation, citation, and other aspects of writing. When it comes to referencing sources, CMOS presents two distinct systems: the notes and bibliography system, and the author-date system. Footnotes, as their name suggests, appear at the bottom of the page, providing supplementary information or, more commonly, source citations. For writers using the notes and bibliography system, footnotes are the primary method of indicating source material, with a corresponding bibliography appearing at the end of the work.

The purpose of footnotes in Chicago style is multifaceted. Primarily, they serve to give credit to original authors whose work has been used, thereby avoiding plagiarism. Secondly, they enable readers to easily locate the source material for further consultation or verification. Finally, footnotes can be used to include brief explanatory notes or digressions that, while relevant to the text, might disrupt the flow if included in the main body. The choice between the notes and bibliography system and the author-date system often depends on the academic discipline or the specific publication's requirements.

The Notes and Bibliography System

The notes and bibliography system is the more traditional of the two Chicago citation methods, favored in many humanities disciplines like literature, history, and the arts. In this system, source information is provided through numbered footnotes or endnotes that appear at the bottom of the page or at the end of the chapter or document, respectively. Each note corresponds to a superscript number inserted in the text at the point where the source is cited.

First Reference Footnotes

When a source is cited for the first time in a footnote, the entry includes a complete bibliographic citation. This means providing all the necessary details for a reader to locate the source. The elements included will vary depending on the type of source, but generally encompass author's name, title, publication information, and page number(s). For example, a book footnote for a first reference would typically include the author's full name, the full title of the book (italicized), publication information (city, publisher, year), and the specific page number(s) being referenced.

Subsequent Reference Footnotes

For any subsequent citations of the same source within the same work, the footnote format is significantly shortened. This is to avoid redundancy and maintain readability. Instead of the full bibliographic details, subsequent notes typically use the author's last name, a shortened version of the title (italicized), and the relevant page number(s). If only one source by a particular author is used, the title can often be omitted entirely in subsequent notes, making them even more concise.

Ibid. Usage

The Latin abbreviation "ibid." (short for *ibidem*, meaning "in the same place") is used in subsequent footnotes when the immediately preceding footnote refers to the same source and the same page number. If "ibid." is used and a different page number is being referenced from that same source, it is followed by the new page number (e.g., "Ibid., 45."). The use of "ibid." is becoming less common in newer editions of the Chicago Manual of Style, which often prefers shortened notes even for consecutive references, but it remains an option for conciseness.

The Author-Date System

The author-date system, while also recognized by Chicago, is less frequently the primary method for footnote usage in the way the notes and bibliography system is. Instead, this system uses brief parenthetical citations within the text that consist of the author's last name, the year of publication, and the page number(s). For example, a parenthetical citation might look like (Smith 2023, 45). This

system is primarily used in the social sciences and natural sciences.

When Footnotes are Used in Author-Date

While the author-date system relies on in-text citations, footnotes in this system are typically reserved for supplementary material rather than direct source attribution. These footnotes might contain additional explanations, elaborations on a point made in the text, or cross-references to other parts of the work. They do not serve the primary purpose of citing sources, which is handled by the parenthetical citations. A reference list, rather than a bibliography, is included at the end of the work, listing all sources cited parenthetically.

Formatting General Footnote Elements

Regardless of the specific source type, several general principles apply to the formatting of Chicago style footnotes. The core idea is to provide clear, consistent, and easily scannable information for the reader. Accuracy in every detail is paramount, as even small errors can lead to confusion or misattribution.

Superscript Numbers

In the text, superscript numbers (e.g., ¹, ²) are placed immediately after the punctuation mark of the clause or sentence to which they relate. If the citation applies to a specific word or phrase, the superscript number is placed directly after that word or phrase. The corresponding footnote at the bottom of the page will begin with the same numeral, typically not superscripted.

Punctuation and Spacing

Within the footnote itself, punctuation plays a crucial role in separating the different elements of the citation. Commas are used to separate the author's name from the title, and the title from publication information. Periods generally conclude a complete footnote entry. Spacing is also important; there is usually a single space after a comma and a single space between elements like the publisher and the year. The first line of each footnote is typically indented, with subsequent lines flush with the left margin, though some styles allow for block formatting with a blank line between footnotes.

Capitalization and Italicization

Titles of books, journals, and other standalone works are italicized in footnotes. Titles of articles, chapters, and other shorter works are enclosed in quotation marks. Capitalization of titles follows

the rules of title case, where major words are capitalized. The author's name is presented in the order given on the source, usually first name followed by last name in the first reference footnote.

Footnotes for Books

Citing books in Chicago style footnotes requires careful attention to the specific details of the publication. The goal is to provide enough information for a reader to identify and locate the exact edition and page(s) being referenced.

Single-Author Book

A typical first-reference footnote for a single-author book will include the author's full name, the full title of the book italicized, the city of publication, the publisher, the year of publication, and the specific page number(s) cited. For example:

- 1. Jane Doe, *The Art of Citation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022), 75.

Book with Multiple Authors

For books with two authors, both names are typically listed. For books with three or more authors, the first author's name is given, followed by "and others" or the Latin abbreviation "et al." depending on the specific preference or publication guidelines. The format is similar to a single-author book otherwise.

Edited Book

When citing an edited book where you are referencing the work as a whole, the editor(s) are listed. If you are referencing a specific chapter within an edited book written by someone other than the editor, you would cite the chapter author first, followed by the chapter title, then the book title, and finally the editor(s) information.

Reprinted or Translated Books

For reprinted books, the original publication date is often included, usually in parentheses, followed by the details of the edition being used. For translated works, the translator's name is included, often preceded by "trans."

Footnotes for Journal Articles

Journal articles are a common source in academic writing, and their citation in Chicago style footnotes follows a structured format to ensure clarity and accuracy.

First Reference Footnote

A first-reference footnote for a journal article will include the author's full name, the title of the article in quotation marks, the title of the journal italicized, the journal's volume and issue number, the year of publication (or date of publication if not a year), and the page number(s) of the article. It is also common to include the DOI (Digital Object Identifier) if available.

- 1. John Smith, "Understanding Footnotes," *Journal of Academic Writing* 15, no. 2 (2023): 112, <https://doi.org/10.xxxx/j.jaw.2023.001>.

Subsequent References

As with books, subsequent references to the same journal article are shortened, typically including the author's last name, a shortened version of the article title, and the page number.

Footnotes for Websites and Online Sources

Citing online sources can be more challenging due to the dynamic nature of the internet. Chicago style provides guidelines to accommodate these sources effectively.

Basic Webpage Citation

For a basic webpage, a footnote would typically include the author's name (if available), the title of the page or article, the name of the website, the date of publication or last update (if available), and the URL. It is also crucial to include an access date.

- 1. Mary Jones, "The Evolution of Chicago Style," *Academic Writing Resources*, last modified October 26, 2023, <https://www.example.com/academicwriting/chicago-style>.

Online Journal Articles and Books

When citing journal articles or books accessed online, the format often incorporates elements of both print and online citations. The DOI or a stable URL is preferred over a general webpage address.

No Author or Publication Date

If an online source lacks an author or publication date, the Chicago Manual of Style advises making the entry as complete as possible with the available information. The title of the work might be placed first, and an access date is particularly important.

Footnotes for Other Source Types

Chicago style offers guidance for a wide array of source materials beyond books and journals, ensuring that all references are handled consistently.

Newspaper and Magazine Articles

Similar to journal articles, newspaper and magazine citations include author, article title, publication name, date, and page number(s). Online versions will also include a URL and access date.

Dissertations and Theses

Citations for dissertations and theses typically include the author's name, the title of the work, the degree sought (e.g., PhD dissertation, MA thesis), the university, the year, and the archival repository or database where it can be found, along with any accession number.

Interviews

Personal interviews, whether conducted by the author or others, are cited in footnotes. This usually includes the name of the interviewee, the type of interview (e.g., "personal interview," "email interview"), the date of the interview, and the location or means of communication.

Common Footnote Errors to Avoid

Even experienced writers can fall into common traps when constructing Chicago style footnotes. Awareness of these pitfalls can help prevent errors and ensure polished citations.

Inconsistent Formatting

One of the most frequent errors is inconsistent formatting across footnotes. This could involve variations in capitalization, punctuation, or the order of elements. Adhering strictly to the Chicago Manual of Style guidelines for each source type is essential.

Incorrect Abbreviations

Misusing or incorrectly formatting abbreviations like "ibid.," "op. cit.," or "loc. cit." can lead to confusion. Modern Chicago style tends to favor shortened notes over these older Latin abbreviations, especially "op. cit." and "loc. cit."

Missing Essential Information

Failing to include critical details such as page numbers, publication dates, or URLs can render a footnote incomplete and unhelpful. Always double-check that all necessary components are present for the specific source type.

Incorrect Placement of Superscript Numbers

Placing the superscript citation number in the wrong spot in the text, such as after a period when it should be before, or missing it entirely, disrupts the connection between the text and the footnote.

The Role of the Bibliography in Chicago Style

While footnotes are the primary method of citation in the notes and bibliography system, the bibliography serves a vital supplementary role. It provides a comprehensive list of all the sources cited in the body of the work, as well as any sources consulted but not directly cited (if the author chooses to include them). The bibliography is organized alphabetically by the author's last name and offers a consolidated reference point for readers.

The bibliography entries for books and articles often mirror the full first-reference footnote but are formatted slightly differently. For instance, in a bibliography, the author's last name usually

precedes their first name, and elements are separated by periods rather than commas in some cases. The goal of the bibliography is to offer a complete and organized overview of the research undertaken, making it easier for readers to explore the source material further. Mastering both footnotes and the bibliography is essential for a strong foundation in Chicago style referencing.

FAQ

Q: What is the fundamental difference between footnotes and endnotes in the Chicago Manual of Style?

A: In the Chicago Manual of Style, both footnotes and endnotes serve the same primary purpose: to cite sources or provide supplementary information. The key difference lies in their placement. Footnotes appear at the bottom of the page where the citation occurs, while endnotes are collected at the end of the chapter or the entire document. The choice between them is often a matter of stylistic preference or the specific requirements of a publication.

Q: When should I use the notes and bibliography system versus the author-date system for Chicago style?

A: The notes and bibliography system is more common in the humanities (history, literature, arts) and is characterized by numbered footnotes or endnotes for citations. The author-date system is more prevalent in the social sciences and natural sciences and uses brief parenthetical citations in the text (e.g., (Smith 2023, 45)). Your field of study and the guidelines of your publisher or institution will typically dictate which system to use.

Q: How do I format a footnote for a book published before 1900 in Chicago style?

A: For books published before 1900, the Chicago Manual of Style often allows for a slightly different format, particularly regarding the inclusion of publisher information. While a modern book citation might include city, publisher, and year, older books may omit the publisher or just include the city and year. It's always best to consult the latest edition of the Chicago Manual of Style for the most precise guidance on historical publications.

Q: What is the correct way to cite a website in a Chicago footnote if there is no author listed?

A: If a website lacks a listed author, you typically begin the footnote with the title of the specific page or article. This is followed by the name of the website (if it differs from the title), the publication or last updated date (if available), and finally the URL and the access date. The access date is particularly important for online sources as they can change or disappear.

Q: Can I use "ibid." repeatedly for multiple consecutive footnotes referencing the same source and page?

A: Yes, you can use "ibid." to refer to the same source and page number as the immediately preceding footnote. However, if the subsequent footnote refers to the same source but a different page, you would follow "ibid." with the new page number (e.g., Ibid., 45.). While "ibid." is a valid option, many modern Chicago style applications prefer shortened notes even for consecutive citations to maintain consistency.

Q: What information should I include in a footnote for a chapter in an edited book?

A: When citing a chapter in an edited book, the footnote should begin with the author of the chapter, followed by the chapter title in quotation marks. Then, you would include the word "in," followed by the title of the edited book (italicized), then the editor(s)' names (preceded by "ed." or "eds."), publication information (city, publisher, year), and finally the page numbers of the chapter.

Q: Should I include the DOI in my Chicago style footnotes for online journal articles?

A: Yes, it is highly recommended to include the DOI (Digital Object Identifier) for online journal articles in your Chicago style footnotes whenever it is available. The DOI provides a stable and persistent link to the article, ensuring readers can easily locate it even if the original URL changes. The DOI is typically placed at the end of the citation.

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