

chicago notes bibliography for a personal communication

Chicago Notes Bibliography for a Personal Communication: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago notes bibliography for a personal communication can be a nuanced aspect of academic and professional writing, often presenting a challenge for those unfamiliar with the Chicago Manual of Style. This guide aims to demystify the process, providing clear, detailed instructions for citing various forms of personal communication within your Chicago-style bibliography. We will cover essential elements, differentiate between different types of personal interactions, and illustrate how to construct accurate citations for both notes and bibliography entries. Understanding these guidelines ensures academic integrity and proper attribution for all sources, even those not readily retrievable. Whether you are citing an email, a phone call, or an interview, this resource will equip you with the knowledge to navigate these citations effectively.

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Understanding Personal Communication in Chicago Style

Defining Personal Communication

In the context of the Chicago Manual of Style, personal communication refers to any exchange of information that is not formally published or archived and therefore not accessible to a general audience. This includes direct conversations, emails, letters, telephone calls, interviews, and even direct messages on social media platforms. The key characteristic is that the information is shared directly between individuals and is not intended for public dissemination or retrieval in a traditional sense. Proper citation of these sources is crucial for acknowledging the information received and allowing readers to understand the basis of your claims, even if they cannot independently verify the

original source.

The Rationale Behind Citing Personal Communication

The decision to cite personal communication stems from the fundamental principles of academic honesty and intellectual property. While these sources may not be as robust as published works, they often contain valuable insights, direct evidence, or unique perspectives that are integral to an argument or research. Citing them acknowledges the source of this information, crediting the individual who provided it. Furthermore, it provides context for the reader, indicating where the information originated and, implicitly, suggesting the context of the interaction. This transparency is vital for maintaining the credibility of your work.

When to Cite Personal Communication

You should cite personal communication whenever you present information, ideas, or data gained directly from an individual that are not common knowledge or publicly available. This is particularly important if the information is critical to your argument, provides unique evidence, or offers a specific interpretation that would otherwise be unattributed. The guiding principle is to provide sufficient information for your reader to understand the source of your knowledge. If a reader were to ask, "Where did you get that information?", and the answer is a direct interaction, then a citation is warranted.

Essential Components of a Personal Communication Citation

Regardless of the specific type of personal communication, certain core elements are essential for a complete and informative citation. These components help the reader understand the nature of the communication and the identity of the source. Accuracy in these details is paramount for both clarity and proper attribution. Missing even one key piece of information can render the citation less useful.

Identifying the Communicator

The first and most critical component is the identity of the person with whom you communicated. This typically includes their full name. If the individual is known by a title or role that is relevant to the context of the communication, that may also be included for added clarity. For instance, citing a professor might include their title if it's relevant to the information they provided.

Specifying the Type of Communication

It is crucial to clearly state the medium or method of the communication. This could be an email, a telephone conversation, an interview, a letter, or a direct message. This detail helps the reader understand the context and potential limitations of the information conveyed.

Indicating the Date of Communication

The date on which the communication occurred is a vital piece of information. This helps establish the timeline of your research and the currency of the information. The format of the date should be consistent with Chicago style, typically including the month, day, and year.

Including Relevant Contextual Details

Depending on the nature of the communication, you may need to include additional details for clarity. For an email, this might be the subject line. For an interview, it could be the location or format (e.g., in-person, via Zoom). For a telephone conversation, it's simply the act of speaking. These details help the reader contextualize the information presented.

Citing Personal Communications in Footnotes or Endnotes

In Chicago style, personal communications are typically cited in the notes (footnotes or endnotes) rather than the main bibliography, especially if they are not retrievable by the reader. The information provided in the note should be detailed enough to identify the source and context. The first note for a particular personal communication should be more comprehensive, while subsequent notes can be shortened if the source is clear.

First Note for a Personal Communication

The initial note should include the name of the communicator, the type of communication, the date, and any relevant details. For example, an email might be cited as: "Email from John Smith to the author, October 26, 2023. Subject: Project Alpha Update." A telephone conversation might be cited as: "Telephone conversation with Jane Doe, November 1, 2023."

Subsequent Notes

If you refer to the same personal communication multiple times, subsequent notes can be abbreviated. However, the Chicago Manual of Style generally advises against using "ibid." for personal communications because their retrievability is questionable. A shortened

version that clearly identifies the source and date is preferred. For instance, "Smith to author, October 26, 2023."

Placement in the Notes System

Notes are placed at the bottom of the page (footnotes) or at the end of the document (endnotes). Each note corresponds to a superscript number in the text. The note should directly follow the information it supports, ensuring a clear link between the claim and its source.

Crafting Bibliography Entries for Personal Communications

While personal communications are primarily cited in notes, they are generally not included in the bibliography unless they are retrievable by the reader. This is a key distinction. The bibliography is intended for sources that a reader can access to verify your work. Since personal communications are private exchanges, they do not meet this criterion. However, there are exceptions, such as interviews that have been recorded and made accessible, or emails that have been publicly shared or archived in a way that a reader could obtain them.

When to Include Personal Communications in the Bibliography

The primary reason to include a personal communication in your bibliography is if the source is accessible to your audience. For example, if you conducted an interview that has been transcribed and is available in an archive, or if you are referencing an email that has been published online or in a collection. In these specific cases, it functions more like a published source.

Format for Retrievable Personal Communications in the Bibliography

If a personal communication is included in the bibliography due to its retrievability, the format will resemble that of other entries, but it should still clearly indicate its nature. For instance, an interview that is archived might look something like: Doe, Jane. "Interview with [Your Name]." Conducted [Date]. [Archival location and accession number, if applicable]. If an email has been published, you would cite it as a published email, including the sender, recipient, date, and publication details.

Specific Types of Personal Communication and Their Citations

Different forms of personal communication require slightly different approaches to citation. Understanding these nuances ensures that your citations are both accurate and informative, providing your reader with the necessary context.

Emails and Electronic Correspondence

Emails are a common form of personal communication. When citing an email that is not retrievable, you will detail it in your notes. A typical note format includes the sender's name, the type of communication ("email"), the recipient (often stating "to the author" if you are the recipient), and the date. The subject line is often included for clarity. For example: "Email from Maria Garcia to the author, April 15, 2024. Subject: Research Proposal Feedback." If you are citing an email that is publicly accessible (e.g., an email published online), it would be treated as a published source in the bibliography.

Telephone Conversations and Voicemails

Citing telephone conversations and voicemails in notes requires identifying the speaker, the mode of communication, and the date. For a telephone conversation: "Telephone conversation with David Lee, May 10, 2024." For a voicemail: "Voicemail from Sarah Kim, June 20, 2024." These are generally not included in the bibliography as they are private and not retrievable.

Interviews (Personal, Telephone, or Video)

Interviews, whether conducted in person, over the phone, or via video conference, are usually cited in notes. The note should include the interviewee's name, the nature of the interview (e.g., "personal interview," "telephone interview," "video interview"), and the date. For example: "Personal interview with Professor Emily Carter, July 1, 2024." If the interview has been formally recorded and is accessible to the public (e.g., in an archive), it can be included in the bibliography with appropriate archival details.

Social Media Direct Messages

Direct messages (DMs) on social media platforms are considered personal communication. Similar to emails and phone calls, they are cited in notes and typically not included in the bibliography unless there's a specific, rare circumstance of public accessibility. The note should identify the sender, the platform, the type of message (e.g., "direct message"), and the date. For instance: "Direct message from Alex Johnson on Twitter to the author, September 5, 2024."

Personal Letters and Memos

Personal letters and memos that are not intended for publication are cited in notes. The note should include the sender's name, the type of communication, and the date. For example: "Letter from Robert Chen to the author, January 20, 2024." As with other forms of private communication, these are generally excluded from the bibliography unless they have been made publicly available in some form.

Distinguishing Between Citable and Non-Citable Sources

The fundamental principle for inclusion in a Chicago-style bibliography is retrievability. If a reader can reasonably access the source to verify your information, then it belongs in the bibliography. Personal communications, by their very nature, are usually private and thus not retrievable. Therefore, they are typically confined to the notes section of your work. When in doubt, err on the side of citing in the notes and only include in the bibliography if you are confident the source is accessible to your audience.

Key Takeaways for Chicago Notes Bibliography for a Personal Communication

Mastering the citation of personal communications in Chicago style involves understanding the difference between private exchanges and public information. Always prioritize clarity and accuracy in your notes, providing sufficient detail for your reader. Remember that the bibliography is for retrievable sources; personal communications usually remain in the notes. By adhering to these guidelines, you ensure scholarly integrity and proper attribution for all information, regardless of its origin. Consistent application of these rules will enhance the credibility and professionalism of your writing.

FAQ

Q: When should I use a Chicago notes bibliography for a personal communication?

A: You should use the notes system for citing personal communication when the information is not retrievable by your reader. This includes emails, phone calls, interviews, personal letters, and direct messages that are private exchanges. The bibliography is generally reserved for sources that your audience can access.

Q: What is the difference between citing an email in a note and in a bibliography according to Chicago style?

A: In a Chicago note, you would detail the sender, type of communication (email), recipient, date, and subject line. In the bibliography, an email would only be included if it

were publicly accessible, and then it would be formatted as a published source with publication details.

Q: Do I need to include the subject line of an email when citing it in a Chicago note?

A: Including the subject line of an email is highly recommended in a Chicago note, as it provides additional context and helps identify the specific email, especially if you've had multiple communications with the same person.

Q: How do I cite a telephone conversation in a Chicago note?

A: For a telephone conversation, your Chicago note should include the name of the person you spoke with, the date of the conversation, and the fact that it was a telephone conversation. For example: "Telephone conversation with Jane Doe, October 26, 2023."

Q: Can I include social media direct messages in my Chicago bibliography?

A: Generally, no. Social media direct messages are considered private personal communication and are not retrievable by readers. Therefore, they should be cited in your notes, not in the bibliography, unless there's a very specific and unusual circumstance where the messages have been made publicly accessible.

Q: What if I conducted an interview that has been recorded and archived? How should I cite it in Chicago style?

A: If an interview you conducted has been recorded and is accessible through an archive or other public repository, then it should be included in your Chicago bibliography. The entry would include the interviewee's name, the title of the interview (if any), the fact that it was an interview, the date it was conducted, and the archival location and accession number.

Q: Is it necessary to get permission before citing personal communication?

A: While Chicago style doesn't mandate obtaining permission for citing private communications in the same way a formal publication might, it is always good practice, especially when quoting sensitive or personal information. Ethically, it's advisable to inform the communicator that you intend to reference their words or insights in your work.

Q: What is the general principle for deciding whether to put a personal communication in notes or the bibliography?

A: The core principle is retrievability. If your reader can access the source to verify your information, it belongs in the bibliography. Personal communications, being private exchanges, are typically not retrievable, thus they belong in the notes.

Q: How do I handle follow-up citations to the same personal communication in Chicago style?

A: For subsequent citations to the same personal communication, you can use a shortened note format. Avoid "ibid." for personal communications because their retrievability is uncertain. Instead, clearly identify the source and date, such as "Smith to author, October 26, 2023."

Q: Should I cite a personal letter I received in my Chicago bibliography?

A: No, a personal letter received is typically considered private and non-retrievable communication. It should be cited in your notes section, detailing the sender, type of communication, and date, rather than in the bibliography.

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