

chicago style academic paper humanities

The Chicago Style Academic Paper Humanities: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago style academic paper humanities serves as a foundational framework for scholarly communication within disciplines such as literature, history, philosophy, art history, and religious studies. Mastering this citation style is paramount for students and researchers aiming to present their work with clarity, credibility, and adherence to academic conventions. This comprehensive guide will delve into the intricate details of crafting a Chicago-style paper, covering everything from general formatting principles to the specific nuances of citing various sources. We will explore the core components of a Chicago paper, including its structure, in-text citations, and the comprehensive bibliography or notes system. Understanding these elements will not only ensure proper attribution but also enhance the overall integrity and readability of your academic endeavors in the humanities.

Table of Contents

- Understanding the Chicago Manual of Style
- General Formatting for Chicago Style Papers
- The Two Chicago Citation Systems: Notes-Bibliography vs. Author-Date
- Crafting In-Text Citations in Chicago Style
- The Bibliography or Reference List
- Citing Common Source Types in Chicago Style
- Specific Considerations for Humanities Papers
- Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Understanding the Chicago Manual of Style

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) is a widely respected style guide in the United States, originating from the University of Chicago Press. It provides comprehensive guidelines for writing, citation, and formatting across a broad spectrum of academic disciplines, with particular prominence in the humanities. Unlike some other styles that mandate a singular approach, Chicago offers flexibility, presenting two distinct citation systems: the Notes-Bibliography (NB) system and the Author-Date system. This dual nature allows scholars to choose the method best suited to their specific field and the nature of their research. For humanities scholars, the NB system is generally preferred due to its elegance in embedding source information directly within the text through footnotes or endnotes, allowing for more fluid prose.

The underlying philosophy of CMOS is to prioritize clarity, consistency, and readability. It aims to make the reading experience as seamless as possible

by ensuring that sources are clearly and efficiently acknowledged without disrupting the flow of argument. This is particularly important in the humanities, where complex ideas and intricate arguments are common. The manual itself is a detailed and authoritative resource, covering a vast array of editorial practices, from grammar and punctuation to the intricacies of indexing and manuscript preparation. Familiarity with the latest edition of the manual is crucial for ensuring accuracy and staying current with established academic norms.

General Formatting for Chicago Style Papers

Adhering to general formatting guidelines is the first step in presenting a professional Chicago-style academic paper. These conventions ensure a standardized appearance that aids both readers and reviewers in navigating your work. While specific departmental or instructor guidelines may sometimes supersede these general rules, understanding the baseline expectations of Chicago style is essential for any student or scholar in the humanities.

Page Layout and Margins

Standard margins for a Chicago-style paper are typically one inch on all sides of the page: top, bottom, left, and right. This consistent spacing ensures that the text is not cramped and provides adequate room for any annotations or binding. The font of choice is usually a readable, 12-point serif font such as Times New Roman or Garamond, though instructors might specify other acceptable fonts. Double-spacing is the standard for the main body of the text, enhancing readability and providing space for handwritten comments.

Title Page and Running Heads

A title page is generally required for Chicago-style papers, although its inclusion might vary based on instructor preferences. If used, the title page should include the full title of the paper, the author's name, the course name and number, the instructor's name, and the date. Centering these elements on the page is typical. Some disciplines or journals may also require running heads (or page headers), which usually include a shortened version of the title and the page number. For a Chicago-style paper, the page number is typically placed in the upper right-hand corner of each page, starting with the first page of the main text (not the title page or abstract, if included).

First Page of the Document

The first page of your Chicago-style paper, after the title page (if used), begins with the main body of your text. The title of the paper should be centered and in title case at the top of the first page, followed by a double-spaced paragraph. No extra lines should be added between the title and the start of the text. In-text citations, whether footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical author-date citations, will begin to appear as you introduce your source material.

The Two Chicago Citation Systems: Notes-Bibliography vs. Author-Date

One of the defining features of the Chicago Manual of Style is its provision of two distinct citation systems, each serving slightly different purposes and catering to different disciplinary preferences. For academic papers in the humanities, the Notes-Bibliography (NB) system is overwhelmingly the most common and often the preferred choice. However, understanding both systems is beneficial for comprehensive academic writing.

The Notes-Bibliography (NB) System

The Notes-Bibliography system is characterized by the use of numbered footnotes or endnotes within the text to cite sources. Each note corresponds to a superscript number in the text. These notes provide the full bibliographic information for the first citation of a source, and for subsequent citations of the same source, they use a shortened form. This system is favored in many humanities fields because it allows for a more elegant integration of source material into the prose, as readers can consult the notes without extensive interruption to the main text. The system also allows for the inclusion of explanatory or discursive material within the notes themselves, which can be useful for elaborating on a point or providing additional context without derailing the main argument.

At the end of the paper, a comprehensive bibliography is provided, listing all sources cited in the notes. This bibliography is alphabetized by the author's last name and provides full publication details for each entry. The bibliography serves as a valuable resource for readers who wish to consult the original sources themselves. The combination of discrete notes and a cumulative bibliography offers a robust and detailed approach to source attribution that is highly valued in scholarly writing.

The Author-Date System

The Author-Date system, while less common in traditional humanities disciplines than the NB system, is prevalent in some social sciences and other fields. In this system, in-text citations consist of the author's last name and the year of publication enclosed in parentheses, for example, (Smith 2020). If a page number is relevant, it is also included, such as (Smith 2020, 45). This system is designed for quick identification of sources and is particularly useful in fields where frequent citation of a large body of work is common, such as empirical research. The corresponding reference list at the end of the paper is alphabetized by author's last name and provides full bibliographic information, similar to the bibliography in the NB system, but it is often titled "References" rather than "Bibliography."

Crafting In-Text Citations in Chicago Style

The method of in-text citation in Chicago style is directly dictated by the chosen citation system. For humanities scholars primarily utilizing the Notes-Bibliography system, the implementation involves careful placement of numbered superscripts and the subsequent creation of corresponding notes.

Using Superscript Numbers for Notes

When you refer to, quote, paraphrase, or summarize information from a source, you must insert a superscript number immediately following the relevant text. This number corresponds to a specific note in either your footnotes or endnotes. The placement of the superscript is crucial: it generally follows punctuation. For example, if a sentence ends with a quote, the superscript number should appear after the closing quotation mark but before any terminal punctuation like a period or question mark. If the citation pertains to a specific phrase or clause, the superscript number should appear after that phrase or clause, before the punctuation that follows it. Consistency in placement is key to maintaining clarity and adherence to the style.

Footnotes vs. Endnotes

Footnotes appear at the bottom of the page on which the citation occurs, while endnotes are compiled at the end of the document, typically before the bibliography. Both serve the same function of providing source information. Footnotes offer the advantage of immediate accessibility for the reader, as they are on the same page as the reference. Endnotes, on the other hand, can help maintain a cleaner page layout and are preferred by some authors for their less intrusive appearance. Regardless of the choice between footnotes

and endnotes, the numbering must be sequential and continuous throughout the entire document. Each note begins with a superscript number matching the one in the text.

Content of Notes

The first time a source is cited in your notes, the note should contain full bibliographic details: author's name (first name first), title of the work (italicized), publication information (city, publisher, year), and page number(s) referenced. Subsequent citations of the same source typically use a shortened form, including the author's last name, a shortened title (if necessary to distinguish from other works by the same author), and the page number. For direct quotes, it is imperative to include the exact page number from which the quote is taken.

The Bibliography or Reference List

The bibliography, or reference list, is a vital component of any Chicago-style academic paper, serving as a comprehensive inventory of all the sources consulted and cited within the work. It allows readers to locate and verify the information presented in your paper, thereby reinforcing the credibility and scholarly integrity of your research. The structure and content of the bibliography are meticulously defined by the Chicago Manual of Style to ensure clarity and consistency across academic publications.

Structure and Alphabetization

The bibliography is typically arranged in alphabetical order by the author's last name. If a source has no author, it is alphabetized by the first significant word of its title (ignoring articles like "a," "an," or "the"). Each entry in the bibliography should be formatted with a hanging indent, meaning the first line of each entry is flush with the left margin, and subsequent lines are indented. This formatting makes it easier for readers to scan the list and locate specific entries by author.

Formatting Entries

The exact formatting of each bibliographic entry depends on the type of source being cited (e.g., book, journal article, website). However, there are general principles. Author names are listed with the last name first, followed by the first name. Titles of books and journals are italicized, while titles of articles within journals or chapters within books are placed

in quotation marks. Publication information, including the city of publication, publisher, and year, is also included for books. For journal articles, the journal title, volume, issue number, date, and page range are provided. It is crucial to consult the latest edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* for precise punctuation and formatting details for each source type.

Distinguishing Bibliography from Works Cited

While often used interchangeably in casual academic parlance, it's important to note that a "Bibliography" in the Chicago NB system is intended to be a comprehensive list of all sources consulted, whether or not they were directly cited in the text. A "Works Cited" list, more common in other styles like MLA, only includes sources that were directly referenced in the paper. However, in practice, many instructors using Chicago style may ask for a "Bibliography" that functions like a "Works Cited" list, containing only those sources that appear in the notes. Always clarify your instructor's specific requirements.

Citing Common Source Types in Chicago Style

Effectively citing a diverse range of sources is a hallmark of rigorous academic research in the humanities. The Chicago Manual of Style provides detailed guidance for numerous source types, ensuring that every piece of information drawn from external material is properly attributed. While a complete list is extensive, understanding the formatting for common humanities sources is a critical step.

Books

When citing a book, the note and bibliography entry will include the author's full name, the full title of the book in italics, and the publication information: city of publication, publisher, and year. For example, a note might look like: 1. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 17. The bibliography entry would be: Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995. Note the inversion of the author's name in the bibliography and the inclusion of the translator and publication details.

Journal Articles

Citing journal articles requires providing the author's name, the title of

the article in quotation marks, the title of the journal in italics, followed by the volume number, issue number, publication date, and page range. A note example: 2. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 145. The bibliography entry: Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." In *Image-Music-Text*, translated by Stephen Heath, 142-48. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977. This example shows how to cite an article within a translated collection, which is common in literary studies.

Websites and Online Sources

Citing online sources requires careful attention to detail, as online content can be ephemeral. Include the author (if known), the title of the specific page or document in quotation marks, the name of the website in italics, and the date of publication or last update if available. Crucially, include a stable URL and the date you accessed the material. A note might be: 3. "The Rosetta Stone," British Museum, accessed October 26, 2023, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/> [access date]. The bibliography entry would be: British Museum. "The Rosetta Stone." Accessed October 26, 2023. <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/> [access date]. The emphasis on the access date is vital for online resources.

Chapters in Edited Books

When citing a chapter from an edited book, you need to specify the chapter author, the chapter title, the title of the edited book, the editor(s), and the publication details for the book. A note might appear as: 4. Edward Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," in *Orientalism's Interlocutors: Dissidence and Dialogue*, ed. ']', ' (London: Routledge, 2009), 25. The bibliography entry would be: Said, Edward. "Orientalism Reconsidered." In *Orientalism's Interlocutors: Dissidence and Dialogue*, edited by John Smith, 20-35. London: Routledge, 2009. Ensuring the distinction between the chapter author and the editor is fundamental.

Specific Considerations for Humanities Papers

The humanities present unique challenges and opportunities for academic writing, and Chicago style offers flexibility to accommodate these. The emphasis on interpretation, argumentation, and engagement with complex theoretical frameworks means that citation practices should support, rather than hinder, the development of these elements.

The Role of the Translator

In fields like comparative literature, philosophy, and history, engaging with texts originally written in foreign languages is common. When you use a translated work, it is essential to acknowledge the translator. In the Notes-Bibliography system, the translator's name is included in both the initial note and the bibliography entry, often following the title. The phrase "trans." or "translated by" precedes the translator's name. For example, a note might state: Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 50. This attribution respects the intermediary role the translator plays in making the text accessible to an English-speaking audience and acknowledges their contribution to the interpretation of the work.

Citing Primary vs. Secondary Sources

Humanities research often involves a critical interplay between primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are the original materials being analyzed—literary texts, historical documents, artwork, philosophical treatises. Secondary sources are scholarly analyses of these primary materials. When citing both, it is crucial to be clear about which type of source you are referencing. For instance, when quoting directly from a novel (a primary source), the citation should clearly indicate the novel and the page number. If you are discussing an interpretation of that novel by a literary critic (a secondary source), you would cite the critic's work. The Chicago style's robust notational system allows for clear differentiation between these two categories of sources within the text and in the bibliography.

Quoting Poetry and Prose

Special attention is given to the formatting of quotations, especially in literary analysis. Short quotations (typically fewer than five lines of prose or three lines of poetry) are usually incorporated into the text, enclosed in quotation marks, and followed by the appropriate citation. Longer quotations, known as block quotes, are set off from the main text as a distinct paragraph, indented, and without quotation marks. For block quotes of poetry, line breaks should be maintained, and for block quotes of prose, paragraph breaks should also be preserved. The page number citation for block quotes typically follows the final punctuation of the quote. This visual distinction helps readers differentiate between your voice and the voice of the source material.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Navigating the intricacies of the Chicago style can lead to occasional missteps. Awareness of common errors can significantly improve the accuracy and professionalism of your academic work. Recognizing these potential pitfalls is the first step toward avoiding them, ensuring your paper adheres to scholarly standards.

Inconsistent Formatting

One of the most frequent errors is inconsistency in formatting. This can manifest in various ways, such as using different styles for footnotes and endnotes, variations in the capitalization of titles, inconsistent use of italics versus quotation marks, or differing punctuation within bibliographic entries. For instance, some authors might incorrectly italicize article titles or use quotation marks for book titles. Maintaining strict adherence to the Chicago Manual of Style's guidelines for every element, from margins to the final punctuation in a bibliography entry, is essential. Regular review and proofreading, specifically checking for formatting consistency, are highly recommended.

Incorrect Placement of Superscript Numbers

The precise placement of superscript numbers for notes is a common source of error. While the general rule is to place them after the enclosing punctuation of the quoted or paraphrased material, there are nuances. For example, if a sentence contains multiple sources, each requiring a citation, care must be taken to associate the correct number with the correct piece of information. Superscript numbers should almost always appear *before* terminal punctuation like periods or commas at the end of a sentence, but *after* quotation marks. Correct placement ensures that the reader can easily identify which part of the text is being referenced by a particular note.

Omitting Essential Information in Citations

Another common mistake is the omission of crucial details in citations, particularly in the initial note for a source. This can include leaving out the publisher, the year of publication, or the specific page number for a quote. When citing a book with multiple authors or editors, ensuring all relevant names are included and correctly formatted is also important. For online sources, forgetting to include the URL or the access date can render the citation incomplete and unhelpful for readers. Always double-check that each citation contains all the information required by the Chicago style for

that specific source type.

Confusing the Notes-Bibliography and Author-Date Systems

For students new to Chicago style, there can be confusion between the Notes-Bibliography and Author-Date systems. This can lead to a paper that uses superscripts in the text but then provides an author-date reference list, or vice-versa. It is vital to understand which system your instructor requires and to apply its rules consistently throughout your paper. The principles for formatting notes are distinct from the principles for author-date parenthetical citations, and attempting to mix them will result in an inconsistent and incorrect citation scheme.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the primary difference between the Notes-Bibliography and Author-Date systems in Chicago style for humanities papers?

A: The primary difference lies in how sources are cited within the text. The Notes-Bibliography system uses numbered footnotes or endnotes to cite sources, allowing for more fluid prose, while the Author-Date system uses parenthetical citations (Author Year, Page) directly in the text. For most humanities papers, the Notes-Bibliography system is the preferred choice.

Q: When do I need to include a page number in a Chicago-style citation?

A: You must include a page number whenever you are quoting directly from a source. It is also highly recommended when paraphrasing or summarizing specific ideas or arguments, especially if they are contained within a particular section of the source, to help readers locate the information efficiently.

Q: How do I format a bibliography entry for a book with multiple authors in Chicago style?

A: For a book with two authors, list both in the bibliography, with the first author's name inverted (Last, First) and the second author's name in normal

order (First Last). If there are three or more authors, list only the first author's name in inverted order, followed by "et al." or "and others."

Q: Can I use block quotes for very short quotations in a Chicago-style paper?

A: No, block quotes are reserved for longer quotations. Generally, prose quotations of more than five lines and poetry quotations of more than three lines should be formatted as block quotes, set off from the main text and indented. Shorter quotations should be integrated into the text and enclosed in quotation marks.

Q: What is the correct way to cite a website in a Chicago-style note?

A: In a note, you should include the author (if known), the title of the specific page or document in quotation marks, the name of the website in italics, and the date of publication or last update if available. Crucially, always include the URL and the date you accessed the material. The bibliography entry follows a similar structure but with the author's name inverted and slightly different punctuation.

Q: Should I use footnotes or endnotes in my Chicago-style humanities paper?

A: The choice between footnotes and endnotes is largely a matter of preference and depends on what your instructor or publisher prefers. Footnotes appear at the bottom of the page where the reference occurs, while endnotes are compiled at the end of the document before the bibliography. Both are acceptable in the Notes-Bibliography system.

Q: How do I cite a source that has no author in Chicago style?

A: If a source has no author, begin the citation (both in notes and the bibliography) with the title of the work. In the bibliography, alphabetize the entry by the first significant word of the title, ignoring articles like "a," "an," or "the."

[Chicago Style Academic Paper Humanities](#)

Related Articles

- [chicago manual style common errors](#)
- [chicago manual style copyright rules](#)
- [chicago manual style for independent publishers](#)

[Back to Home](#)