

chicago style citation examples email

chicago style citation examples email are crucial for academic integrity and clear communication when referencing digital correspondence. Whether you're a student, researcher, or professional, understanding how to properly cite an email in Chicago style ensures your audience can locate the source and acknowledges the origin of your information. This article will provide a comprehensive guide, covering various scenarios and offering clear, actionable Chicago style citation examples for emails. We will delve into the nuances of citing emails in both notes-bibliography and author-date systems, distinguishing between published and unpublished correspondence, and addressing common questions about email citations. Mastering these citation formats is essential for avoiding plagiarism and upholding academic standards in any written work.

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Understanding Chicago Style Email Citations

Chicago style, a widely respected citation system, offers specific guidelines for referencing various source types, including electronic communications like emails. Properly citing an email requires attention to detail, as it falls under the category of personal communication. Unlike published works, personal communications are generally not retrievable by the reader, which influences how they are documented. The primary goal is to provide enough information for a reader to understand the context and origin of the information obtained from the email, while acknowledging that direct retrieval might not be possible.

When employing Chicago style, two main systems exist: the notes-bibliography system and the author-date system. Each system has its unique approach to incorporating citations, with the former using footnotes or endnotes and the latter relying on in-text parenthetical citations. Regardless of the system used, the core components of an email citation remain largely the same: the sender's name, the recipient's name, the date of the email, and a description of the content, often including the subject line. The specific format and placement of these elements will differ between the two systems and depending on whether the email is considered published or unpublished.

Citing Emails in Notes-Bibliography Style

The notes-bibliography system in Chicago style utilizes footnotes or endnotes for in-text citations and a bibliography at the end of the work. For emails, this means the first mention of the email in the text will be accompanied by a superscript number, leading to a corresponding note. Subsequent mentions of the same email can be shortened in the notes.

First Citation of an Unpublished Email

When citing an email for the first time that is not publicly available, the note should include the sender's name, the recipient's name (often "to the author" or the specific recipient), the date the email was sent, and the subject line. The format aims to provide enough identifying information for the reader. The key is to be precise about the sender and recipient.

- **Note Format:** Sender's Full Name, "Subject Line" (email to Recipient's Full Name or "to author"), Month Day, Year.

For example, if you received an email from Dr. Jane Smith to you, dated October 26, 2023, with the subject "Research Findings," the first note would appear as:

1. Jane Smith, "Research Findings" (email to author), October 26, 2023.

Subsequent Citations of an Unpublished Email

After the first full citation, subsequent references to the same email in the notes can be abbreviated. This avoids redundancy and keeps the notes concise. The abbreviated note typically includes the sender's last name and a shortened description of the email, often the subject line, followed by the date.

- **Abbreviated Note Format:** Sender's Last Name, "Shortened Subject," Month Day, Year.

Using the previous example, a subsequent note would look like this:

2. Smith, "Research Findings," October 26, 2023.

Citing Published Emails

If an email has been published, either in a book, journal, or online archive accessible to the public, it is treated more like a published source. The citation will require more bibliographic detail, allowing readers to locate the published version. This includes information about the publication

itself.

- **Note Format for Published Email:** Sender's Full Name, "Subject Line," Month Day, Year, accessed Month Day, Year, in Publication Title, URL or page number.

For instance, if an email from John Doe to Mary Roe on January 15, 2022, with the subject "Project Update," was published in an online journal:

3. John Doe, "Project Update," January 15, 2022, accessed November 15, 2023, in Digital Humanities Quarterly, <https://doi.org/xxxx/xxxx>.

Bibliography Entry for Unpublished Email

In the notes-bibliography system, the bibliography typically lists only published sources. Unpublished personal communications like emails are usually not included in the bibliography. The reasoning is that these are not sources that the general reader can access. If the email was published, it would be included with full bibliographic details similar to other published works.

Citing Emails in Author-Date Style

The author-date system uses in-text parenthetical citations and a reference list at the end of the document. For emails, the in-text citation is brief and directs the reader to the full entry in the reference list.

In-Text Citation for an Unpublished Email

In the author-date system, an in-text citation for an unpublished email does not typically include the email content directly. Instead, it might refer to the sender and the date, guiding the reader to the reference list for full details. However, Chicago style generally discourages direct in-text citations for personal communications that are not retrievable. Instead, it's often best to incorporate the information directly into the prose, mentioning the sender and date, and then providing a full reference list entry.

Alternatively, if a brief in-text reference is deemed necessary, it might look something like this, though often this information is integrated into the sentence itself:

(Smith, "Research Findings," October 26, 2023)

More commonly, the information is integrated into the text:

In an email dated October 26, 2023, Dr. Jane Smith shared her research findings (Smith).

Reference List Entry for an Unpublished Email

The reference list in the author-date system provides complete details for all cited sources. For an unpublished email, the entry should include the sender's name, the date, and the subject. The recipient is implied to be the author of the work, or can be explicitly stated if necessary.

- **Reference List Format:** Sender's Last Name, First Name. "Subject Line." Email to Recipient's Name or "to author," Month Day, Year.

For the email from Dr. Jane Smith:

Smith, Jane. "Research Findings." Email to author, October 26, 2023.

Reference List Entry for a Published Email

Similar to the notes-bibliography system, if an email has been published, the reference list entry will reflect this, providing enough information for the reader to locate the published source. This includes details about the publication where the email appeared.

- **Reference List Format for Published Email:** Sender's Last Name, First Name. "Subject Line." Month Day, Year. In Publication Title, accessed Month Day, Year. URL or page number.

For the published email example:

Doe, John. "Project Update." January 15, 2022. In Digital Humanities Quarterly, accessed November 15, 2023. <https://doi.org/xxxx/xxxx>.

Frequently Encountered Scenarios

Navigating email citations can present unique challenges. Understanding how to handle different situations ensures accuracy and adherence to Chicago style. Common scenarios include citing emails where you are the recipient, emails where you are not the recipient, and emails that are part of a larger conversation.

Citing an Email You Received

When you are the recipient of an email and you wish to cite it, the recipient's name in the citation can be indicated as "to author" or your own name. This is especially common in notes-bibliography style. In author-date style, it's often implied that the citation refers to an email received by the author of the paper.

Citing an Email You Did Not Receive (Forwarded or BCC'd)

If you are citing an email that was forwarded to you or that you were BCC'd on, it's important to be transparent. In the citation, you can indicate the original sender and recipient, and then mention how you obtained the email. For unpublished emails, this might involve noting it was "forwarded by [name]" or "received via BCC from [name]." However, for unpublished personal communications, it's often best to seek permission from the sender if you intend to quote extensively, especially if it contains sensitive information.

Citing an Email Chain

When citing an email chain, you generally cite each individual email that you are referencing. Each email within the chain would be treated as a separate piece of personal communication and cited accordingly, either in your notes or reference list. If the chain is a continuous back-and-forth, you might cite the earliest relevant email and then refer to the subsequent replies within your text or notes, rather than creating a separate citation for every single message.

Best Practices for Email Citations

Adhering to best practices ensures clarity, professionalism, and academic integrity when citing emails. These practices go beyond mere format and delve into ethical considerations and reader convenience.

- **Obtain Permission:** If you are quoting from an email that is not your own and contains potentially sensitive or private information, it is best practice to obtain permission from the sender before using it in your work.
- **Be Specific:** Provide as much detail as possible in your citation to help the reader understand the context of the email. This includes the subject line, date, sender, and recipient.
- **Maintain Consistency:** Ensure that your email citations are consistent throughout your work, adhering strictly to either the notes-bibliography or author-date system.
- **Consider Your Audience:** Think about whether your audience will be able to access the email. If it's a private email, acknowledge this limitation. If it's a publicly archived email, provide enough information for retrieval.
- **Integrate into Prose When Possible:** For unpublished emails, it is often more fluid to integrate the information into your writing by mentioning

the sender and date, rather than relying solely on formal citations, especially in the author-date system.

- **Use Subject Lines Wisely:** The subject line is crucial for identifying an email. Ensure it is accurately transcribed in your citation.

By following these guidelines and examples, you can confidently cite emails in Chicago style, enhancing the credibility and clarity of your academic or professional writing. Remember that the core principle is to provide your reader with the necessary information to understand and, where possible, verify your sources.

Q: How do I cite a personal email from a professor in Chicago style?

A: To cite a personal email from a professor in Chicago style (notes-bibliography system), use a footnote or endnote. The first citation would typically be: Sender's Full Name, "Subject Line" (email to Recipient's Full Name or "to author"), Month Day, Year. For an author-date system, the reference list entry would be: Sender's Last Name, First Name. "Subject Line." Email to author, Month Day, Year.

Q: Should I include an email in my bibliography if it's unpublished?

A: Generally, unpublished personal communications like emails are not included in the bibliography in the notes-bibliography system. They are only cited in the footnotes or endnotes. If the email has been published, then it would be included.

Q: What if the email subject line is vague?

A: If the subject line is vague, use a brief, descriptive phrase that accurately reflects the email's content in your citation. For example, if the subject was "Quick Question," you might use "Email Regarding Question" or a similar descriptor that helps identify the email's purpose.

Q: How do I cite an email I sent to someone else?

A: If you are citing an email you sent, the recipient's name would be included in the citation. For example, in a note: Your Full Name, "Subject Line" (email to Recipient's Full Name), Month Day, Year. In the reference list (author-date): Your Last Name, First Name. "Subject Line." Email to Recipient's Full Name, Month Day, Year.

Q: Is it acceptable to cite an email without the sender's permission?

A: It is best practice to obtain permission from the sender before quoting from or citing a personal email, especially if it contains sensitive information. While Chicago style provides formatting, ethical considerations regarding privacy are paramount.

Q: How do I handle an email with a very long subject line?

A: For long subject lines, you can truncate them slightly for your citation if it doesn't obscure the email's meaning, but aim to keep it as descriptive as possible. Alternatively, you can include the full subject line as it appears in the email.

Q: What is the difference between citing an email and citing a message from social media?

A: Emails are considered personal communications, whereas social media messages, depending on their public nature and platform, might be treated differently. Public posts on platforms like Twitter or Facebook might be cited as online publications, while private messages would be treated more like personal communications. The key difference lies in the retrievability and public accessibility of the content.

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