

chicago style citation examples government document

chicago style citation examples government document are crucial for academic and professional writing, ensuring proper attribution and clarity when referencing official publications. Navigating the nuances of Chicago style for government documents can be complex, given the variety of formats and issuing bodies involved. This article provides a comprehensive guide to citing various types of government documents accurately, covering everything from federal reports to local ordinances. We will break down the essential components of a Chicago style citation for these materials, offering clear examples to illustrate best practices. Understanding these elements will empower you to meticulously cite congressional acts, executive orders, and other governmental outputs, enhancing the credibility and scholarly rigor of your work. Prepare to master the art of Chicago style citation for government documents with detailed explanations and practical examples.

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Understanding Chicago Style for Government Documents

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) offers specific guidelines for citing government documents, recognizing their unique nature as official publications issued by legislative, executive, or judicial branches at various levels of government. Proper citation ensures that readers can locate the original source material, thus supporting the integrity of your research. The fundamental principle is to provide enough information for precise identification and retrieval. This involves detailing the issuing body, the title of the document, publication details, and any specific identifiers like report numbers or session laws.

Government documents can originate from a wide spectrum of sources, including national legislatures, presidential administrations, federal agencies, state legislatures, and municipal councils. Each type may have its own conventions for numbering, titling, and dissemination, which CMOS attempts to accommodate. The goal remains consistent: to provide a clear and unambiguous reference for your audience. Whether you are citing a historical legislative act or a contemporary agency report, the underlying structure of the Chicago style citation will guide you toward accuracy.

Key Components of a Chicago Style Citation for Government Documents

When constructing a Chicago style citation for a government document, several key components are consistently required, regardless of the specific document type. These elements work together to form a complete and retrievable reference. Understanding each part is essential for accurate citation construction.

Author or Issuing Body

The author is typically the government body that produced the document. This can be a department, agency, committee, or legislative body. For instance, the U.S. Department of Commerce or the Senate Committee on the Judiciary would be considered the author. If a specific individual authored the report within an agency, their name might be included, but the primary identifier is usually the governmental entity.

Title of the Document

This is the official title of the report, act, ordinance, or other government publication. It should be presented accurately as it appears on the document itself. Titles of longer works, such as reports, are usually italicized, while titles of shorter works or articles within a larger publication are typically enclosed in quotation marks. For legislative acts, specific naming conventions apply.

Publication Information

This includes details such as the place of publication, the publisher (often the government printing office or the issuing agency itself), and the year of publication. For legislative documents, session information, bill numbers, or public law numbers are crucial. The specific details required will vary based on the nature of the government document.

Specific Identifiers

Government documents often have unique identifiers that are critical for locating them. These can include report numbers, bill numbers, public law numbers, Congressional Record citations, or document numbers. Including these identifiers significantly enhances the retrievability of the source.

Citing Federal Government Documents

Federal government documents from the United States are a common source in academic research. Chicago style provides clear frameworks for citing various federal publications, from congressional acts to agency reports. Accuracy in detailing the issuing body and specific identifiers is paramount.

Congressional Acts and Legislation

Citing congressional acts requires careful attention to the official title, public law number, and session or date. For example, the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 is cited with its official designation.

- **Example:** Civil Rights Act of 1964, Public Law 88-352, 78 Stat. 241.

When referencing Congressional Record proceedings, it's important to include the volume, page numbers, and date. This allows for precise reference to the debate or testimony.

- **Example:** Remarks by Senator John Smith, Congressional Record, 117th Cong., 2nd sess., vol. 168, no. 5 (January 10, 2022), 1234-1236.

Executive Orders

Executive Orders are directives issued by the President. They are typically cited by their number and the year they were issued, along with the compilation where they can be found.

- **Example:** Executive Order 13769, "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States," January 27, 2017.

Agency Reports and Publications

Reports and publications from federal agencies are usually cited by the agency name, the title of the report, and publication details. Report numbers, if available, should always be included.

- **Example:** U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics: May 2021 National Estimates, BLS Report no. 11-2320 (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2022).

For documents published online by an agency, the URL and access date are included if a print version is not readily available or if the online version is the most authoritative.

Citing State Government Documents

State government documents, much like federal ones, require specific citation formats. The issuing body will be the state legislature, agency, or judicial branch. The structure often mirrors federal citations but is adapted to state-specific naming conventions.

State Laws and Statutes

Citing state laws involves identifying the state, the relevant legislative session, the chapter or section number, and the year. Specific abbreviations and citation styles may vary by state, so consulting state-specific style guides or the relevant legislative website is advisable.

- **Example:** California Penal Code, § 187 (West 2023).

State Agency Reports

Similar to federal agency reports, state agency reports are cited by the agency name, the report title, and publication details. The state's official printing office or the agency itself is often the publisher.

- **Example:** Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Biennial Report on Air Quality in Texas, 2020-2022 (Austin: TCEQ, 2023).

Citing Local Government Documents

Local government documents, such as city ordinances or county resolutions, are vital for understanding local governance. Their citation follows similar principles to state and federal documents, focusing on the issuing municipal or county body.

City Ordinances

City ordinances are legal rules passed by a city council. They are typically cited by the ordinance number and the year of enactment, along with the municipal code where they can be found.

- **Example:** City of Chicago, Municipal Code, ch. 16, § 16-160 (2023).

County Resolutions

County resolutions are official statements or decisions made by a county board. They are cited by the resolution number, the year, and the county name.

- **Example:** Cook County Board of Commissioners Resolution 23-0567, adopted November 15, 2023.

Citing International Government Documents

Documents from international governmental organizations or foreign national governments require careful citation to ensure clarity across different national contexts. The primary concern is to provide enough detail for international retrieval.

United Nations Documents

United Nations documents have a standardized citation system that includes the issuing body, the document symbol, and the title. The year of publication is also important.

- **Example:** United Nations, General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization, A/77/1 (2022).

Foreign Government Publications

Citing publications from foreign governments involves identifying the specific government ministry or agency, the title of the document, and its publication details, including the country of origin and year. If the document is in a foreign language, the title should be given in the original language, followed by an English translation in brackets.

- **Example:** Her Majesty's Stationery Office, The National Health Service: A Five Year Forward View (London: HMSO, 2014).

Citing Agency Websites and Online Government

Information

With the increasing digitization of government information, citing online resources is essential. Chicago style guidelines for online sources are adapted for government websites, emphasizing URLs and access dates.

Agency Websites

When citing information directly from a government agency's website, treat the agency as the author and the webpage title as the document title. Include the website name, publication date if available, and the URL with an access date.

- **Example:** U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Climate Change Indicators in the United States," last modified October 15, 2023, <https://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators>.

Online Databases and Portals

Many government documents are available through specialized online databases or portals. Cite these by identifying the database or portal, the document within it, and the access information.

- **Example:** National Archives and Records Administration, "Founders Online," <https://founders.archives.gov/>.

Common Pitfalls in Citing Government Documents

Despite the detailed guidelines, several common mistakes can occur when citing government documents in Chicago style. Being aware of these pitfalls can help prevent errors and ensure accuracy.

Inconsistent Author Attribution

One frequent issue is inconsistent attribution of the authoring body. It is crucial to identify the correct government entity responsible for the document, whether it's a specific department, a congressional committee, or a presidential administration.

Omitting Key Identifiers

Government documents often rely on specific numbers and identifiers for retrieval. Omitting public law numbers, bill numbers, report numbers, or document symbols makes it difficult for readers to locate the source. Always include these if they are available.

Incorrect Title Formatting

Ensuring the correct formatting of titles – italicizing major works like reports and using quotation marks for shorter sections or specific articles within a larger government publication – is important for adherence to Chicago style conventions.

Incomplete Publication Details

Failing to include essential publication information such as the year, publisher (often the Government Publishing Office or the issuing agency), and place of publication can render a citation incomplete. Always verify that all necessary publication details are present.

Mastering Chicago style citation for government documents requires attention to detail and an understanding of the specific nature of these publications. By consistently applying the principles of clear attribution, accurate titling, and comprehensive publication information, writers can ensure their research is both credible and accessible. The examples provided offer a solid foundation for navigating the complexities of citing federal, state, local, and international governmental materials, as well as online resources. Diligent practice and reference to the official Chicago Manual of Style will further refine your citation skills, making your academic and professional writing more robust.

Q: What is the most important element to include when citing a government document in Chicago style?

A: The most important element is the issuing body, as it clearly identifies the source of the official information.

Q: How do I cite a government report that doesn't have a clear author listed?

A: In such cases, use the name of the government agency or department that issued the report as the author.

Q: Should I italicize the title of a government report in

Chicago style?

A: Yes, major government publications like reports, acts, and official manuals are typically italicized in Chicago style citations.

Q: What is the difference between citing a federal law and a federal regulation?

A: Federal laws are enacted by Congress and cited with their public law number and statutes at large citation, while regulations are issued by federal agencies and are typically found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).

Q: How do I cite a government document found on a specific agency's website?

A: You should cite the agency as the author, the title of the specific page or document, and include the URL and access date, similar to citing any web page.

Q: Is it necessary to include the publisher when citing a government document?

A: Yes, it is generally necessary to include the publisher, which is often the Government Publishing Office (GPO) or the issuing agency itself, along with the place and year of publication.

Q: What if I cannot find a publication date for a government document?

A: If a publication date is genuinely unavailable, note that in your citation. However, try to find the closest possible date, such as the date of the legislative session or the year the agency report was submitted.

Q: How do I cite a treaty or international agreement in Chicago style?

A: Treaties are typically cited by their title, the parties involved, the date of signing or ratification, and the treaty series or collection where they can be found.

Q: When should I use an asterisk or other special notation in a government document citation?

A: Special notations are rarely used in standard Chicago style citations for government documents unless they are part of the official document's designation or an annotation required by a specific field of study. Focus on accuracy and completeness.

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