

chicago style citation examples

personal communication

Understanding Chicago Style Citation for Personal Communication: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago style citation examples personal communication are essential for academic integrity and accurately attributing sources in research. Personal communication, encompassing a wide array of interactions like emails, interviews, and phone calls, presents unique challenges for citation. This guide provides an in-depth look at how to correctly cite these sources within the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS), covering both footnotes/endnotes and the author-date system. We will explore the specific components required for each type of personal communication, the nuances of in-text citations, and common pitfalls to avoid. Mastering these rules ensures your work is both credible and compliant with academic standards.

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Understanding Personal Communication in Chicago Style

Personal communication, by its definition, refers to information exchanged directly between individuals that is not published or readily accessible to others. This category is broad and includes conversations, interviews, letters, emails, text messages, social media messages, and even informal discussions. The Chicago Manual of Style recognizes that while these sources are valuable for providing unique insights and primary evidence, they require careful handling to ensure proper attribution and to distinguish them from published works. Unlike books or articles that have a standardized publication process and are retrievable, personal communication is ephemeral and exists only in the direct exchange. Therefore, the citation style prioritizes clarity and provides enough information for the reader to understand the nature of the communication, even if they cannot access it

directly. The goal is to give credit to the source of the information while acknowledging its unpublished nature.

Footnote/Endnote Citation for Personal Communication

The footnote/endnote system in Chicago style requires a full citation the first time a source is referenced, followed by a shortened version for subsequent citations. For personal communication, the key is to provide specific details about the interaction to identify it clearly.

Email Citations

Citing an email involves detailing the sender, recipient, date, and the nature of the communication. The first mention in a footnote or endnote should be comprehensive, allowing the reader to understand the context.

The first footnote/endnote for an email should include the sender's name, the recipient's name, the date the email was sent, and a description of its content or subject. For example:

John Smith to Jane Doe, October 26, 2023, regarding the project proposal.
Jane Doe to John Smith, October 27, 2023, concerning meeting arrangements.

Subsequent citations for the same email can be shortened, typically by using the sender's last name, a shortened description, and the date.

Interview Citations

Interviews, whether conducted in person, by phone, or via video conference, are treated as personal communication. The citation should clearly indicate who conducted the interview and who was interviewed, along with the date and location (if applicable).

The initial footnote/endnote for an interview should include the name of the interviewee, the interviewer, the date of the interview, and the mode of interview (e.g., personal interview, telephone interview, video call).

Interview with Dr. Eleanor Vance by the author, March 15, 2023, personal interview, Chicago, IL.
Telephone interview with Professor Robert Chen by the author, April 10, 2023.

When referring to the same interview again, a shortened note can be used, referencing the interviewee's last name and the date.

Telephone Conversation Citations

Citing a telephone conversation requires identifying the participants and the date the call took place. The content of the conversation will be described in the note.

The first note for a telephone conversation should state the name of the person spoken to and the date of the conversation.

Conversation with Sarah Miller, November 5, 2023.
Telephone call with David Lee, November 6, 2023.

Subsequent mentions can use a shortened format, such as "Miller, conversation, November 5, 2023."

Other Forms of Personal Communication

This category can include a variety of interactions not explicitly covered above. The principle remains the same: provide enough information to identify the source and the context of the communication.

Examples include text messages, social media direct messages, or informal conversations. The citation should specify the sender, recipient, date, and the platform or method of communication.

Text message from Emily Carter to the author, December 1, 2023.
Direct message from Mark Johnson to the author on Instagram, December 2, 2023.
Informal conversation with a colleague, Dr. Anya Sharma, January 20, 2024, in the university library.

Author-Date System for Personal Communication

The author-date system, also known as the parenthetical citation system, requires in-text citations that refer readers to an entry in the reference list at the end of the work.

In-Text Citations

In the author-date system, personal communication is typically noted parenthetically within the text, followed by the date. Because personal communication is not included in the reference list in this system, the in-text citation must contain sufficient information to identify the source.

The in-text citation for personal communication usually includes the name of the communicator and the date of the communication.

(Smith, October 26, 2023)
(Miller, November 5, 2023)
(Vance, March 15, 2023)

If the communicator's name is mentioned in the sentence, only the date is needed in parentheses.

John Smith explained the proposal details on October 26, 2023.

Reference List Entries

A crucial distinction of the author-date system in Chicago style is that personal communication is generally not included in the reference list. This is because the information is considered inaccessible to the reader. Therefore, the in-text citation must be self-sufficient. This is a key difference from other citation styles. The full details are provided within the text or in footnotes/endnotes when using the other Chicago system.

Key Considerations for Personal Communication Citations

When citing personal communication, several factors contribute to a robust and ethical citation. The primary aim is always clarity and enabling the reader to understand the origin of the information.

Accuracy is paramount. Ensure that names, dates, and the description of the communication are precise.

Context is crucial. Briefly explain the nature of the communication so the reader understands its relevance and how the information was obtained.

Confidentiality and permissions: For sensitive information or communications with individuals outside of academic discourse, ensure you have obtained appropriate permissions before citing.

Avoid citing information that is generally known or publicly available through other means. Personal communication should be used for unique insights or specific details not found elsewhere.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Navigating the citation of personal communication can lead to errors if not approached carefully. Awareness of common pitfalls can help maintain academic rigor.

Failing to provide enough identifying information in the footnote/endnote or in-text citation.

Including personal communication in the bibliography or reference list when using the author-date system.

Treating personal communication as if it were a published work, implying it is retrievable.

Incorrectly formatting dates or names.

Not obtaining permission to cite potentially sensitive or private conversations.

The Importance of Accuracy

The meticulous citation of personal communication, like all sources, underpins the credibility of your research. It demonstrates respect for the individuals who provided the information and allows your readers to evaluate the evidence you present. By adhering to Chicago style guidelines, you ensure transparency and contribute to the scholarly discourse with integrity. Proper citation builds trust and reinforces the foundation of academic research.

Q: What is considered personal communication in Chicago style?

A: In Chicago style, personal communication refers to any information exchanged directly between individuals that is not published or accessible to the general public. This includes emails, letters, interviews, telephone conversations, text messages, social media messages, and informal discussions.

Q: Should personal communication be included in the bibliography when using Chicago style's author-date system?

A: No, personal communication should not be included in the reference list when using Chicago style's author-date system. The in-text citation must provide all necessary identifying details as the source is considered inaccessible to the reader.

Q: How do I cite an email in a Chicago style footnote?

A: For the first footnote/endnote citation of an email, you should include the sender's name, the recipient's name, the date the email was sent, and a

brief description of its content or subject. For example: John Smith to Jane Doe, October 26, 2023, regarding the project proposal.

Q: What information is required for citing an interview in Chicago style?

A: When citing an interview in Chicago style (footnote/endnote), you should include the name of the interviewee, the interviewer (often "the author"), the date of the interview, and the mode of interview (e.g., personal interview, telephone interview).

Q: Can I use shortened notes for personal communication in Chicago style footnotes?

A: Yes, after the first full citation of personal communication in a footnote or endnote, subsequent citations can be shortened. This typically involves using the communicator's last name, a brief description of the communication, and the date.

Q: What is the difference in citing personal communication between the footnote/endnote system and the author-date system in Chicago style?

A: In the footnote/endnote system, personal communication is cited fully in the note itself and can be shortened in subsequent notes. In the author-date system, personal communication is not listed in the reference list; all necessary identifying information must be included in the in-text parenthetical citation.

Q: Do I need to mention the exact time of a personal communication in the citation?

A: Generally, the exact time is not required unless it is crucial for disambiguation or context. The date of the communication is the standard requirement for Chicago style citations of personal communication.

Q: How should I cite a social media direct message in Chicago style?

A: For social media direct messages, treat them as personal communication. In a footnote/endnote, include the sender's name, recipient, the date, and the platform (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter). For example: Mark Johnson to the author, December 2, 2023, direct message on Instagram.

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