

# chicago style citing music

## Mastering Chicago Style Citing Music: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago style citing music, while seemingly straightforward, can present unique challenges for students and researchers due to the diverse formats in which music is consumed and documented. This comprehensive guide delves into the intricacies of citing musical works according to the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS), covering everything from recorded performances and live concerts to sheet music and digital streaming. We will explore the fundamental principles of the author-date and notes-bibliography systems, providing detailed examples and best practices for accurately attributing musical sources. Understanding these guidelines is crucial for academic integrity and for properly acknowledging the creators and disseminators of musical art.

### Table of Contents

Introduction to Chicago Style for Music

Understanding the Two Chicago Citation Systems

Citing Recorded Music: Albums, Singles, and EPs

Citing Individual Tracks and Songs

Citing Live Performances and Concerts

Citing Sheet Music and Scores

Citing Music Found Online: Streaming and Digital Downloads

The Importance of Consistency in Chicago Style Music Citations

Best Practices for Citing Music in Chicago Style

## Understanding the Fundamentals of Chicago Style for Music Citations

Chicago style, also known as the Manual on Uniformity of Style, offers two distinct citation systems:

the notes-bibliography system and the author-date system. Both systems aim to provide clear attribution and allow readers to locate the original sources. When dealing with music, the choice of system often depends on the discipline and the specific requirements of an academic institution or publication. The notes-bibliography system is more common in the humanities, including musicology and art history, while the author-date system is prevalent in the social sciences.

The core principle behind both Chicago systems is to provide sufficient information for a reader to identify and retrieve the cited material. For music, this means meticulously recording details such as the artist, album title, song title, record label, release date, and, where applicable, the performers, composers, lyricists, and specific recording details. The complexity arises from the layered nature of musical works – a composition, a specific performance, and a recorded rendition all represent distinct entities that may require separate citation.

## **The Two Chicago Citation Systems: Notes–Bibliography vs. Author–Date**

### **The Notes–Bibliography System Explained**

The notes-bibliography system uses footnotes or endnotes to cite sources within the text. Each note provides a numbered reference, and a corresponding bibliography at the end of the work lists all cited sources alphabetically by author or title. This system is highly flexible and allows for detailed commentary within the notes, which can be particularly useful for discussing specific musical interpretations or historical contexts.

When citing music in the notes-bibliography system, the initial citation in a footnote or endnote will contain comprehensive details. Subsequent citations of the same source are typically shortened. The bibliography then presents a standardized entry for each source, ensuring a clear overview of all

materials consulted. This detailed approach is favored for its thoroughness and its capacity to integrate analytical commentary directly with the source reference.

## The Author–Date System Explained

In contrast, the author-date system places in-text citations directly within the narrative, typically in parentheses, followed by the author's last name and the year of publication (e.g., (Smith 2020)). A corresponding reference list at the end of the document provides full bibliographic details for each in-text citation, organized alphabetically by author's last name. This system is often preferred for its conciseness and its suitability for disciplines where direct source retrieval is paramount.

While the author-date system may seem simpler for general texts, citing music requires careful consideration of how to represent complex musical works within its framework. The key is to ensure that the in-text citation, combined with the reference list entry, provides all necessary information to identify the specific musical piece or recording. This system emphasizes efficiency and direct linking between textual discussion and source material.

## Citing Recorded Music: Albums, Singles, and EPs

### Essential Components of a Recorded Music Citation

Citing recorded music, whether it's a full album, a single, or an extended play (EP), demands attention to specific details. In the notes-bibliography system, a full note will typically include the artist's name, the album title (*italicized*), the record label, the catalog number (if available), and the year of release. For example:

- First Footnote/Endnote: [Artist Name], "[Album Title]," [Record Label] [Catalog Number], [Year of Release].

In the author-date system, the reference list entry would follow a similar structure, often prioritizing the artist as the primary author. The in-text citation would then refer to the artist and the year.

## Variations for Different Recording Formats

The formatting for albums, singles, and EPs might vary slightly based on the specific release. For instance, singles might have a different catalog number structure than full-length albums. It is crucial to consult the actual recording or reliable discographical information to obtain accurate details. For EPs, which are shorter than albums but longer than singles, the same principles apply: identify the artist, title, label, and year. The key is always to be as specific as possible to avoid ambiguity.

## Citing Individual Tracks and Songs

### Referencing Specific Songs within an Album

Citing an individual track or song requires more specificity than citing the entire album. In the notes-bibliography system, a footnote or endnote would include the artist, the song title (in quotation marks), the album title (italicized), the record label, the catalog number, and the year of release. It is also beneficial to include the specific track number if known. For example:

- First Footnote/Endnote: [Artist Name], "Song Title," on [Album Title], [Record Label] [Catalog Number], [Year of Release], track [Track Number].

For the author-date system's reference list, the entry would mirror this information. The in-text citation would point to the artist and year of the album the track is from, with the full details present in the reference list. If a song is released as a single and not on an album, the citation would adapt to reflect that, omitting album details and focusing on the single's release information.

## Attributing Composers and Lyricists

For classical music or works where the composer and lyricist are distinct from the performing artist, it is essential to attribute these roles. In the notes-bibliography system, the composer and lyricist can be mentioned in the note, often after the performing artist and song title. For example:

- First Footnote/Endnote: [Composer Name], "[Song Title]," lyrics by [Lyricist Name], performed by [Performing Artist Name], on [Album Title], [Record Label] [Catalog Number], [Year of Release].

In the author-date system, the reference list entry would also need to account for these roles. The primary entry might be by the composer if the focus is on the composition itself, or by the performing artist if the emphasis is on the recorded performance. Clarity is key, ensuring the reader understands who created the music and who performed it.

## Citing Live Performances and Concerts

### Documenting Unrecorded Musical Events

Citing live performances and concerts presents a unique challenge as they are ephemeral events

without standardized publication details. For the notes-bibliography system, a note would typically include the name of the ensemble or artist, the title of the work performed, the venue, the city, and the date of the performance. Personal attendance is usually cited as a personal communication if directly quoted, but for general references to a performance, a description of the event is sufficient.

- First Footnote/Endnote: Performance of [Composer Name]'s "[Work Title]," by the [Ensemble Name], at [Venue Name], [City], [State/Country], [Date].

The author-date system would handle this similarly, with the reference list entry detailing the event. If referring to a live recording that has been released commercially, it should be cited as any other recorded music, with the live aspect noted if it significantly impacts the performance or interpretation.

## **Live Recordings and Broadcasts**

When citing a live recording that has been released, treat it as a commercially available album.

However, it is good practice to indicate that it is a live recording. For broadcast performances, the citation would include the broadcaster, the program name, the performers, the work performed, and the date of the broadcast. This acknowledges the specific medium through which the music was accessed.

## **Citing Sheet Music and Scores**

### **Referencing Published Musical Scores**

Citing sheet music or published scores requires attention to the composer, the title of the musical

work, the editor (if applicable), the publication information (publisher, place, year), and the page number if a specific passage is referenced. In the notes-bibliography system, a note would look like this:

- First Footnote/Endnote: [Composer Name], [Title of Work], ed. [Editor Name] (Place of Publication: Publisher, Year), [Page Number].

The author-date system's reference list would follow a similar structure, with the composer typically serving as the primary author. Ensuring the accuracy of publisher details and publication dates is crucial for proper attribution of printed musical materials.

## **Manuscript Scores and Unconventional Editions**

For manuscript scores or less conventional editions, the citation should provide as much identifying information as possible. This might include the repository where the manuscript is housed, its collection name and number, and any descriptive information about the edition. Clarity and specificity are paramount when dealing with rare or archival musical materials to ensure they can be located by subsequent researchers.

## **Citing Music Found Online: Streaming and Digital Downloads**

### **Navigating Digital Music Platforms**

The rise of digital music platforms like Spotify, Apple Music, and Bandcamp necessitates specific citation practices. For Chicago style, when citing music accessed via a streaming service, include the

artist, song title, album title (if applicable), the streaming service name, and the URL. For the notes-bibliography system, a note could appear as:

- First Footnote/Endnote: [Artist Name], "Song Title," on [Album Title] (or Album Title if a single), [Streaming Service Name], [URL]. Accessed [Date of Access].

The inclusion of the access date is important because online content can change or be removed. For the author-date system, the reference list entry would mirror this information. If a direct link to a stable version of the track is available, that is preferable.

## Digital Downloads and Other Online Sources

For music obtained through digital downloads (e.g., purchasing a track or album from a digital retailer), the citation should indicate the source of the download, such as the retailer's name and the date of purchase, along with the URL if available. If the music is found on a website that is not a dedicated music platform, treat it like any other online source, providing sufficient information to locate it. This includes the website name, the author or artist, the title of the content, and the URL.

## The Importance of Consistency in Chicago Style Music Citations

Regardless of the system chosen (notes-bibliography or author-date) and the specific type of musical source being cited, consistency is paramount. Adhering to a uniform style throughout your work ensures clarity and professionalism. Inconsistencies can confuse readers and detract from the credibility of your research. This applies to punctuation, capitalization, the use of italics and quotation marks, and the order of bibliographic elements.

Maintaining a consistent approach also makes your work easier to edit and proofread. Before submitting any research paper or publication, a thorough review for citation accuracy and consistency is highly recommended. If you are unsure about a particular element, consulting the official Chicago Manual of Style is the best course of action.

## **Best Practices for Citing Music in Chicago Style**

To effectively cite music in Chicago style, remember to be precise and thorough. Always aim to provide enough information for a reader to locate the exact source you used. Pay close attention to the nuances of different musical formats, from classical compositions to contemporary pop recordings and live performances. When in doubt, err on the side of providing more detail rather than less.

Furthermore, familiarize yourself with the specific requirements of your assignment or publication. While Chicago style provides a general framework, individual instructors or editors may have minor variations or preferences. Proactive research and careful attention to detail will ensure your citations are accurate, compliant, and contribute positively to the scholarly discourse surrounding music.

### **Q: What is the primary difference between citing classical music and popular music in Chicago style?**

A: The primary difference lies in attributing the creator. For classical music, the composer is typically the main author. For popular music, the performing artist is usually considered the primary author, with composers and lyricists noted if they are distinct from the performer.

## **Q: How do I cite a song that I only heard on the radio and did not record?**

A: Chicago style generally discourages citing ephemeral or unrecoverable sources like a song heard on the radio without further identification. If you need to mention it, you would likely describe it as a broadcast performance, noting the station and approximate time, but it would not be included in a formal bibliography unless it could be uniquely identified and potentially retrieved.

## **Q: Is it necessary to include the track number when citing a song from an album?**

A: Including the track number is highly recommended when citing an individual song from an album, especially in the notes-bibliography system. It provides a precise locator for the specific piece within the larger work, enhancing clarity for the reader.

## **Q: What is the correct way to cite a cover song in Chicago style?**

A: When citing a cover song, you would attribute it to the performing artist of the cover. In the notes or reference list, you should also mention the original composer and lyricist, and specify that it is a cover of their work. For example: "[Cover Artist Name], "Song Title" (cover), originally by [Original Artist Name]."

## **Q: How should I cite a music video found on YouTube using Chicago style?**

A: To cite a music video on YouTube in Chicago style, you would typically include the uploader (often the artist or record label), the title of the video (in quotation marks), the platform name (YouTube), the URL, and the date of access. If the video is an official release, you might also include details about the song itself, such as the album it's from.

## **Q: What if I am citing a live bootleg recording of a concert?**

A: Citing unofficial live recordings can be challenging. Chicago style emphasizes citing sources that are recoverable. For bootlegs, you would provide as much information as possible about the recording, including the performing artist, the date and location of the concert, and any identifying information about the bootleg itself (e.g., source, distributor, catalog number if known). However, it's important to acknowledge that such sources may not be considered authoritative in all academic contexts.

## **Q: Do I need to include the format (e.g., CD, vinyl, digital) in my Chicago style music citations?**

A: While the Chicago Manual of Style doesn't strictly mandate including the format for all modern music citations (especially with the prevalence of streaming), it can be helpful for clarity, particularly when referencing older or less common formats. For historical research or when the format is significant to the argument, including it is advisable. For most contemporary digital or streaming music, the platform itself serves as the implied format.

## **[Chicago Style Citing Music](#)**

Chicago Style Citing Music

## **Related Articles**

- [chicago style citation legal](#)
- [chicago style conclusion template](#)
- [chicago style capitalization rules](#)

[Back to Home](#)