

chicago style examples for citing government agencies

Mastering Chicago Style for Citing Government Agencies

chicago style examples for citing government agencies is a crucial aspect of academic and professional writing, ensuring clarity, accuracy, and proper attribution when referencing official publications and data. Navigating the nuances of citing government documents can often feel complex, as these sources vary widely in format, origin, and accessibility. This comprehensive guide will demystify the process, providing detailed examples and explanations for citing various types of government materials according to the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS). We will explore the intricacies of citing reports, legislation, websites, and other official documents, covering both footnotes/endnotes and the bibliography. Understanding these elements is vital for researchers, students, and anyone needing to incorporate government information into their work.

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Understanding the Core Principles of Chicago Style for Citing Government Documents

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) emphasizes providing sufficient information for readers to locate

the source independently. When citing government agencies, this principle remains paramount. The key is to identify the author (often the agency itself), the title of the work, the publication details (date, place if applicable), and a unique identifier if available. CMOS recognizes that government documents can originate from federal, state, or local levels, and the citation should reflect this origin clearly. The structure generally follows the author-title system, but the specific elements will adapt based on the nature of the government publication.

One of the primary challenges in citing government documents is determining the corporate author. Often, the issuing agency acts as the author. This could be a specific department, a sub-agency, or even a committee. It is crucial to be as specific as possible in identifying this corporate author. For instance, citing the "Environmental Protection Agency" is generally sufficient, but if the report comes from a specific office within the EPA, like the "Office of Research and Development," that level of detail can be beneficial. The goal is to provide enough information to distinguish the source from any other document published by the same broader entity.

The format of government publications also dictates the citation style. A printed report will differ from an online database or a piece of legislation. CMOS provides guidelines that accommodate these variations, aiming for consistency within the citation system. Understanding the difference between a numbered series, a specific report number, or a publication date is essential for constructing an accurate citation. The elements are generally presented in a logical order, moving from the most specific identifier (the author) to the broader publication context.

Citing Government Reports in Chicago Style

Government reports are among the most common types of sources encountered when researching official information. These can range from detailed scientific studies to policy recommendations and statistical compilations. The Chicago Manual of Style offers specific guidance for these publications, focusing on identifying the issuing agency as the author and providing the report's title and publication details.

Footnotes and Endnotes for Government Reports

When citing a government report in a footnote or endnote, the general format begins with the corporate author, followed by the title of the report in italics. Publication details, including the place of publication (if readily available and distinct), the issuing agency (if not already clear from the author), and the year of publication, follow. A report number, if assigned, is also a critical piece of information that aids in retrieval.

For example, a footnote might look like this:

- U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, *Climate Change Impacts in the United States: The Third National Climate Assessment* (Washington, DC: U.S. Global Change Research Program, 2014), NOAA Climate.gov report A-12.

If the issuing agency is the same as the publisher and clearly identified as the author, you may be able to omit the publisher information to avoid redundancy. However, clarity is always the primary objective. The inclusion of specific report identifiers, such as "Report No. X" or specific collection names, can significantly improve the accuracy of the citation.

Bibliography Entries for Government Reports

The bibliography entry for a government report generally mirrors the footnote/endnote format but is structured for alphabetical listing and may omit page numbers unless referring to a specific section. The author (corporate agency) comes first, followed by the full title in italics. Publication details, including city of publication (if applicable), the publisher (often the agency itself or a government printing office), and the year, are then provided.

The corresponding bibliography entry for the above example would be:

- U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. *Climate Change Impacts in the United States: The Third National Climate Assessment*. Washington, DC: U.S. Global Change Research Program, 2014.

It's important to note that for very well-known government agencies, such as the Census Bureau or the Department of State, the full departmental name is usually retained for clarity. When the issuing entity is less universally recognized, providing a more complete description of its affiliation can be beneficial.

Citing Government Publications with Series Information

Many government reports are part of numbered or named series. This information is crucial for accurate identification and should be included in the citation. The series title and number are typically placed after the main title of the report or in a designated spot according to CMOS guidelines, depending on whether it functions as a subtitle or a distinct identifier.

A typical format for a report within a series might be:

- National Aeronautics and Space Administration. *Apollo 11 Mission Report*. NASA Special Publication SP-350. Washington, DC: NASA Scientific and Technical Information Office, 1975.

In footnotes, you would include specific page numbers if referencing a particular section of the report.

Citing Legislation and Legal Documents in Chicago Style

Citing government legislation and other legal documents requires a precise approach to ensure that legal scholars and practitioners can easily find the referenced statutes, regulations, and court decisions. Chicago style has specific conventions for these types of sources, which differ from standard reports due to their formal structure and often extensive citation pathways.

Footnotes and Endnotes for Legislation

When citing U.S. federal statutes in footnotes or endnotes, the standard format includes the act's popular name or title, its Public Law number, and the year it was enacted. For state legislation, the format will vary slightly depending on the state's statutory compilation.

An example of a federal statute citation:

- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Pub. L. no. 101-336, 104 Stat. 327 (1990).

For regulations, the citation will typically include the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) title, part, and section number, along with the publication date of the relevant CFR volume.

An example of a federal regulation citation:

- 29 C.F.R. § 1614.105 (2023).

Bibliography Entries for Legislation

Bibliography entries for legislation often retain the core information but are formatted for alphabetical listing. For statutes, this usually means the popular name or title comes first, followed by the statutory citation details. For regulations, the CFR citation precedes the publication year.

The bibliography entry for the Americans with Disabilities Act:

- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Pub. L. no. 101-336, 104 Stat. 327.

The bibliography entry for the regulation:

- 29 C.F.R. § 1614.105.

It is crucial to consult the specific edition of the U.S. Code or Code of Federal Regulations being referenced and to include the year of publication of that volume. When referencing historical legislation, the original enactment year is also vital.

Citing Government Websites and Online Resources in Chicago Style

The proliferation of government information online necessitates careful citation of websites and digital resources. Chicago style provides a framework for citing these sources, focusing on the authoring agency, the title of the specific page or document, the website name, and the URL. Given the dynamic nature of the internet, including the access date is also a good practice.

Footnotes and Endnotes for Government Websites

When citing a specific page or document from a government agency's website, the footnote should include the authoring agency, the title of the specific page or document, the name of the website (if distinct from the agency), and the URL. The access date is essential for online resources that may change over time.

A typical footnote for a government webpage:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Basic Information about Lead in Drinking Water," last modified October 15, 2021, <https://www.epa.gov/lead/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water>.

If the author is an individual within a government agency, their name would appear first, followed by their title and the agency's name. However, for most official documents and pages, the agency itself is the corporate author.

Bibliography Entries for Government Websites

The bibliography entry for a government website follows a similar structure to the footnote but is adapted for alphabetical order. The authoring agency is listed first, followed by the title of the page or document. The website name is included, and the URL is provided without an access date in the bibliography unless the page is particularly ephemeral or has undergone significant revisions.

The bibliography entry for the EPA example:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "Basic Information about Lead in Drinking Water." Last modified October 15, 2021. <https://www.epa.gov/lead/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water>.

When citing online databases or interactive resources, more specific instructions might apply, focusing on how to navigate to the data and any unique identifiers provided by the resource itself. Consistency in the level of detail across all online citations is key.

Special Considerations for Citing Government Sources in Chicago Style

Beyond the general guidelines, several specific scenarios require attention when citing government agencies. These include citing international governmental organizations, historical documents, and unpublished or ephemeral government materials. Chicago style encourages adaptability while maintaining the core principles of clarity and accuracy.

Citing International Governmental Organizations

For organizations like the United Nations or the World Health Organization, the agency itself serves as the corporate author. The citation format will generally follow that of national government reports, with the organization's name, the title of the document, and publication details. Including the specific division or program that published the material can be helpful.

An example might be:

- United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2022: Summary of Results* (New York: United Nations, 2022).

The bibliography entry would be similar, structured for alphabetization.

Citing Historical Government Documents

When citing historical government documents, such as presidential papers or congressional records from earlier periods, it is important to include the most accurate and complete publication information available. This may involve referencing archival sources, specific editions, or historical compilations. The goal is to ensure the source is identifiable even if it's no longer in print or readily accessible.

Citing Congressional Hearings and Committee Prints

Congressional hearings and committee prints are valuable government resources. Their citation typically includes the committee name, the title of the hearing or print, the Congress and session number, and the date of the hearing or publication. For hearings, witness names and affiliations may also be relevant details to include, particularly if they are central to the argument.

A typical citation might include:

- U.S. Congress, House Committee on the Judiciary, *Oversight of the Department of Justice: Hearing before the Committee on the Judiciary*, 116th Cong., 2nd sess., July 15, 2020.

This detailed approach ensures that all essential elements of the government document are captured, facilitating proper attribution and reader access, which are the cornerstones of effective academic and professional writing.

FAQ: Chicago Style Examples for Citing Government Agencies

Q: What is the primary difference between citing a government report and a standard book in Chicago style?

A: The primary difference lies in identifying the author. For government reports, the author is typically a corporate entity (the government agency or department) rather than an individual. This corporate author is listed first, followed by the title and publication details, much like a book, but with the specific convention of naming the agency as the originator.

Q: How do I cite a government report where the agency and publisher are the same?

A: If the issuing agency is clearly identified as the author and is also the publisher, you can often omit the publisher's name in the citation to avoid redundancy. The key is to ensure the reader can still identify the source unequivocally. For example, if the U.S. Government Publishing Office publishes a report by the U.S. Census Bureau, and the Census Bureau is listed as the author, you might list the Census Bureau as author and then the publication details without repeating "U.S. Government Publishing Office" as the publisher if it's obvious.

Q: What is the correct way to cite a U.S. federal law in Chicago style?

A: In Chicago style, federal laws are typically cited by their popular name or title, followed by their Public Law number and the year of enactment. You should also include the Statutes at Large (Stat.) citation if readily available. For example: Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, Pub. L. no. 101-549, 104 Stat. 2399 (1990).

Q: When citing a government website, should I always include the access date?

A: Yes, it is highly recommended to include the access date when citing government websites, especially in footnotes/endnotes. This is because web content can be updated or removed without notice, and the access date helps readers verify the information at the time you consulted it. While generally omitted from bibliography entries, it's good practice for clarity on ephemeral online sources.

Q: How do I cite a report from a specific office or division within a larger government agency?

A: Be as specific as possible. If a report comes from a particular office or division within a larger agency, include that subdivision in the authoring entity. For example, instead of just "Environmental Protection Agency," you might cite "U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Research and Development." This level of detail enhances accuracy and helps readers locate the exact source.

Q: What if the government document has an individual author but is published by an agency?

A: In such cases, Chicago style generally prioritizes the individual author's name, followed by their title (if relevant), and then the agency or organization that published the work. The format would resemble citing a book with an individual author but would clearly indicate the governmental affiliation.

Q: How do I cite state government documents in Chicago style?

A: Citing state government documents follows similar principles to federal documents but will reflect the specific naming conventions of the state and its agencies. You will need to identify the state, the relevant department or agency, the title of the document, and publication details specific to that state's governmental publications. The general format of author-title-publication details remains consistent.

Q: Are there specific rules for citing Congressional hearings versus Congressional committee prints?

A: Yes, the citation format differs slightly. Congressional hearings typically include the committee name, the title of the hearing, the specific Congress and session, and the date of the hearing. Congressional committee prints, which are often reports prepared for the committee, will be cited more like a standard report, with the committee as the author and the print's title and publication details.

Q: What if a government report has no clear author or publication date?

A: If a government report lacks a clear author, you would typically start with the title of the work. If the publication date is missing, you can use "n.d." (no date). However, for official government documents, an author and date are usually present, and if they are absent, it might indicate a less formal or unofficial publication, requiring further investigation to determine its credibility and appropriate citation method.

Q: How does Chicago style handle citations for international treaties or agreements involving governments?

A: For international treaties or agreements, Chicago style generally requires citing the official title of the treaty, the parties involved (often represented by the government agencies or their representatives), and the official publication where the treaty can be found, such as a treaty series or a government gazette. Information about ratification dates and entry into force is also important.

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