

chicago style examples for citing social media

Navigating the Nuances: Chicago Style Examples for Citing Social Media

chicago style examples for citing social media are crucial for academic integrity and clear communication in an increasingly digital world. As social platforms become integral to research, reporting, and everyday discourse, understanding how to properly attribute information shared on them is paramount. This comprehensive guide delves into the intricacies of citing various social media formats within the Chicago Manual of Style, offering practical examples for platforms ranging from Twitter and Facebook to Instagram and YouTube. We will explore the essential components of a social media citation, discuss the differences between notes-bibliography and author-date systems, and provide detailed instructions for common scenarios. Mastering these techniques ensures your work adheres to scholarly standards, giving credit where it's due and allowing your readers to easily locate your sources.

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Understanding the Core Principles of Citing Social Media in Chicago Style

Chicago Style, renowned for its flexibility, offers guidelines for citing a wide array of sources, including those found on social media. The fundamental principle remains consistent: provide enough information for your reader to locate the original source. When citing social media, this means identifying the creator, the specific content, the platform it appeared on, and its retrieval date. The Chicago Manual of Style recognizes that social

media is dynamic; posts can be edited or deleted, making a specific retrieval date particularly important. Understanding the distinct requirements for the notes-bibliography system versus the author-date system is also essential for accurate citation.

The process of citing social media in Chicago Style hinges on identifying key pieces of information that distinguish it from traditional published works. Unlike a book or a journal article, social media content is often ephemeral and lacks formal publication details like page numbers or ISBNs. Therefore, the focus shifts to the username of the creator, the exact text of the post (if short), the date and time it was posted, the platform itself, and a stable URL or a clear description of how the item was accessed. This meticulous approach ensures that even the most informal digital content can be properly referenced within academic or professional writing.

Notes-Bibliography System Examples for Social Media

The notes-bibliography system in Chicago Style requires both footnotes or endnotes and a bibliography. When citing social media in notes, you provide detailed information about the specific post. In the bibliography, you offer a more condensed, alphabetized entry. The goal is to offer immediate context in the note and a comprehensive reference in the bibliography.

Citing Tweets (Now X)

For citing a tweet (now known as an X post), you'll need the author's username, the full text of the tweet, the date and time it was posted, and the URL. If the tweet is part of a thread, you may need to indicate that. For bibliographical entries, the format is generally consistent, focusing on the essential identifying elements.

- **Footnote/Endnote Example:**

1. @BarackObama, "Congratulations to the incoming class of @ObamaFoundation Scholars! I'm excited to see the positive change you'll bring to the world," Twitter, June 20, 2023, 10:15 AM, <https://twitter.com/BarackObama/status/123456789012345678>.

- **Bibliography Example:**

Obama, @BarackObama. "Congratulations to the incoming class of @ObamaFoundation Scholars! I'm excited to see the positive change you'll bring to the world." Twitter, June 20, 2023, 10:15 AM. <https://twitter.com/BarackObama/status/123456789012345678>.

Citing Facebook Posts

Citing a Facebook post requires identifying the individual or page that made the post, the exact content, the date and time of posting, and the URL. If the post is from a private group or profile, you may need to note that it's not publicly accessible, though ideally, you'd cite publicly available content.

- **Footnote/Endnote Example:**

2. The White House, "President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act into law today," Facebook, November 15, 2021, 1:30 PM,
<https://www.facebook.com/WhiteHouse/posts/pfbid02g2n3p7w5v...>

- **Bibliography Example:**

The White House. "President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act into law today." Facebook, November 15, 2021, 1:30 PM.
<https://www.facebook.com/WhiteHouse/posts/pfbid02g2n3p7w5v...>

Citing Instagram Posts

For Instagram, the creator's username, the caption of the post, the date it was published, and the URL are key. Instagram posts are primarily visual, so the caption often serves as the textual content to cite.

- **Footnote/Endnote Example:**

3. @NationalGeographic, "A stunning sunset over the Serengeti captured by our contributor, Jane Doe. wildlife photography," Instagram, October 26, 2023, 7:00 PM,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CzA1B2C3D4E/>.

- **Bibliography Example:**

@NationalGeographic. "A stunning sunset over the Serengeti captured by our contributor, Jane Doe. wildlife photography." Instagram, October 26, 2023, 7:00 PM.
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CzA1B2C3D4E/>.

Citing YouTube Videos

When citing a YouTube video, include the uploader's name or channel, the title of the video, the platform, the date of upload, and the URL. If specific timestamps are relevant to your citation, include them in the note.

- **Footnote/Endnote Example:**

4. TED, "The Power of Vulnerability | Brené Brown," YouTube, March 10, 2011, 10:00 AM, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5g9fUo700k>.

- **Bibliography Example:**

TED. "The Power of Vulnerability | Brené Brown." YouTube, March 10, 2011, 10:00 AM. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5g9fUo700k>.

Citing Other Social Media Platforms

The general principles apply to other platforms like LinkedIn, Reddit, TikTok, or Pinterest. Identify the creator, the content, the platform, the date, and the URL. The exact phrasing might vary slightly based on the platform's conventions.

- **Footnote/Endnote Example (Reddit):**

5. u/ExampleUser, "Seeking advice on academic publishing," Reddit r/AskAcademia, October 27, 2023, 11:00 AM, https://www.reddit.com/r/AskAcademia/comments/17h6t0f/seeking_advice_on_academic_publishing/.

- **Bibliography Example (Reddit):**

u/ExampleUser. "Seeking advice on academic publishing." Reddit r/AskAcademia, October 27, 2023, 11:00 AM. https://www.reddit.com/r/AskAcademia/comments/17h6t0f/seeking_advice_on_academic_publishing/.

Author-Date System Examples for Social Media

In the author-date system, citations appear in the text as parenthetical references (Author Year), and a corresponding reference list is provided at the end. This system is often preferred in the sciences and social sciences.

Citing Tweets (Now X) in Author-Date

For author-date, the in-text citation will typically include the author's handle or name and the year. The reference list entry will be more detailed, similar to the bibliography in the notes-bibliography system.

- **In-text Citation Example:**

(Obama 2023)

- **Reference List Example:**

Obama, @BarackObama. 2023. "Congratulations to the incoming class of @ObamaFoundation Scholars! I'm excited to see the positive change you'll bring to the world." Twitter, June 20, 10:15 AM.
<https://twitter.com/BarackObama/status/123456789012345678>.

Citing Facebook Posts in Author-Date

Similar to tweets, Facebook posts are cited with the creator's name and the year in the text, followed by a detailed entry in the reference list.

- **In-text Citation Example:**

(The White House 2021)

- **Reference List Example:**

The White House. 2021. "President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act into law today." Facebook, November 15, 1:30 PM.
<https://www.facebook.com/WhiteHouse/posts/pfbid02g2n3p7w5v...>

Citing Instagram Posts in Author-Date

Instagram posts in the author-date system will use the username and year in the text. The reference list entry provides the full details of the post.

- **In-text Citation Example:**

(National Geographic 2023)

- **Reference List Example:**

@NationalGeographic. 2023. "A stunning sunset over the Serengeti captured by our contributor, Jane Doe. wildlife photography." Instagram, October 26, 7:00 PM.
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CzA1B2C3D4E/>.

Citing YouTube Videos in Author-Date

YouTube videos are cited with the channel name and year in the in-text citation, and a complete entry in the reference list.

- **In-text Citation Example:**

(TED 2011)

- **Reference List Example:**

TED. 2011. "The Power of Vulnerability | Brené Brown." YouTube, March 10, 10:00 AM.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5g9fUo700k>.

Key Considerations for Social Media Citations

When citing social media, several factors require careful attention to ensure accuracy and adherence to Chicago Style. These include precisely identifying the author or creator, establishing the correct date of publication, and providing accessible retrieval information. The dynamic nature of social media means that even seemingly straightforward citations can present unique challenges.

Identifying the Author or Creator

The author is typically the username or the name of the individual or organization that posted the content. Be sure to use the most accurate identifier available. For personal accounts, it's often the full name if available, followed by the username in parentheses or as part of the citation. For organizational accounts, the organization's name is usually sufficient. Consistency in how you identify authors across your work is key.

Determining the Date of Publication

Social media platforms usually display the date and time a post was made. Use this information precisely. If a post was updated, cite the original publication date. If a post is undated, which is rare but possible for older content, note that. The exact time can be important for establishing the sequence of events or conversations.

Providing Access Information

A stable URL is the most common and effective way to allow readers to access social media content. Ensure the URL is correct and leads directly to the post. If the content is from a private account or group and not publicly accessible, you should note this. However, it is best practice to cite publicly available content whenever possible. When a direct URL is not feasible, describe how the content was accessed, such as "private Facebook message" or "Instagram story, viewed October 27, 2023."

When to Cite and When Not To

You should cite social media content when it contains specific information, opinions, or data that you are referencing or building upon in your work. This includes factual claims, arguments, or direct quotes. However, if you are merely mentioning that a platform exists or using a widely known fact that originated on social media but is now common knowledge, a citation may not be necessary. Always err on the side of caution; if in doubt, cite.

Q: How do I cite a deleted social media post in Chicago Style?

A: If a social media post has been deleted and you cannot retrieve it, you should generally avoid citing it. However, if the information from the deleted post is crucial and you have a record of it (e.g., a screenshot or saved text), you can cite your own record. You would typically note that the original post is no longer available and provide details about your

saved version, including the date you accessed or saved it.

Q: What if the author of a social media post uses a pseudonym?

A: If the author uses a pseudonym or handle, you should use that pseudonym or handle as the author's name in your citation. If the real name is known and is more relevant to your work, you can include it in parentheses after the pseudonym, depending on the context and Chicago Style guidelines for pseudonyms.

Q: Do I need to cite every single tweet in a long thread?

A: You only need to cite specific tweets within a thread that you directly reference or quote. If you are referring to the thread as a whole, you might cite the initial tweet and mention that it is part of a thread, or provide a general description of the thread's content.

Q: How do I cite a comment on a social media post?

A: Citing a comment on a social media post follows similar principles. You would identify the commenter (username or name), the content of the comment, the platform, the date and time it was posted, and the URL of the original post. The citation would then direct the reader to the original post where the comment can be found.

Q: What if the social media content is from a private account or group?

A: Chicago Style strongly advises against citing content that is not publicly accessible. If you absolutely must refer to information from a private account or group, you should indicate that the source is private and not available to the general public. However, it is always preferable to use publicly available sources.

Q: Do I need to include the exact time of a social media post in my citation?

A: Including the exact time of a social media post is recommended when available, especially for fast-moving platforms like Twitter or in situations where the precise timing of events is relevant to your research. For less time-sensitive content, the date may suffice, but the Chicago Manual of Style generally encourages specificity when the information is readily available.

Q: How do I cite a live stream on social media (e.g.,

Facebook Live, Instagram Live)?

A: For live streams, cite them as you would a video, but note that it was a live event. Include the platform, the title or description of the live stream, the name of the streamer or channel, the date and time it was broadcast, and the URL if an archive is available. If it was not archived, you would note that and provide the date/time it was viewed.

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