

chicago style footnote example writing guide

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) is a widely respected citation style, particularly in humanities disciplines. Mastering its footnote system can seem daunting, but with a clear guide and examples, it becomes manageable. This comprehensive chicago style footnote example writing guide will equip you with the knowledge to correctly format citations, understand the nuances of short and full notes, and navigate common source types. We will delve into the anatomy of a Chicago style footnote, explore variations for books, articles, websites, and more, and offer practical tips for ensuring accuracy and consistency in your academic and professional writing. Understanding these elements is crucial for academic integrity and for enabling your readers to locate your sources with ease.

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Understanding Chicago Style Footnotes

The Chicago Manual of Style offers two primary citation systems: the author-date system and the notes-and-bibliography system. This guide focuses exclusively on the latter, which relies on superscript numbers within the text to refer to corresponding notes at the bottom of the page (footnotes) or at the end of the document (endnotes). The purpose of these notes is twofold: to acknowledge the sources of information and ideas and to provide readers with the necessary details to find those sources themselves. Adhering to Chicago style footnotes ensures clarity, credibility, and adherence to academic conventions.

The notes-and-bibliography system is favored in many fields, including literature, history, and the arts, because it allows for a more integrated flow within the text. Unlike parenthetical citations, which can interrupt the reading experience, footnotes can also be used for supplementary information or tangential discussions that would disrupt the main narrative. This flexibility makes Chicago style footnotes a powerful tool for scholarly

communication.

Anatomy of a Chicago Style Footnote

A Chicago style footnote, whether it's a full or short note, typically comprises several key components. These components, when arranged correctly, provide a complete bibliographic entry for the cited material. Understanding the order and content of these elements is fundamental to accurate citation.

Full Note Format

The full note is used for the first citation of a particular source. It includes all the necessary bibliographic information to uniquely identify the source. The structure can vary slightly depending on the type of source, but generally includes the author's name, title of the work, publication details, and specific location information within the source.

The general format for a book in a full footnote is:

- Author's First Name Last Name, *Title of Book* (Place of Publication: Publisher, Year), Page Number(s).

For an article in a journal, the full note format typically looks like this:

- Author's First Name Last Name, "Title of Article," *Title of Journal* Volume, no. Issue (Year): Page Number(s).

Short Note Format

Once a source has been fully cited, subsequent references to that same source can be made using a shortened format. This is to avoid repetition and streamline the citation process. The short note includes only enough information to identify the source clearly and distinguish it from other works by the same author or in the same bibliography.

The general format for a book in a short footnote is:

- Author's Last Name, *Shortened Title of Book*, Page Number(s).

For an article in a journal, the short note format is typically:

- Author's Last Name, "Shortened Title of Article," Page Number(s).

Common Source Types and Examples

The specific formatting of a Chicago style footnote depends heavily on the type of source being cited. Below are examples for some of the most frequently encountered source materials, demonstrating both full and short note formats.

Books

Citing books is a cornerstone of academic writing. Whether it's a single-author work, an edited volume, or a chapter within a book, Chicago style provides clear guidelines.

Single-Author Book:

- **Full Note:** Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003), 45.
- **Short Note:** Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 45.

Edited Book:

- **Full Note:** Harold Bloom, ed., *William Shakespeare's Hamlet* (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), 112.
- **Short Note:** Bloom, *William Shakespeare's Hamlet*, 112.

Chapter in an Edited Book:

- **Full Note:** John Smith, "The History of Printing," in *A Survey of Communication*, ed. Mary Jones (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 215.
- **Short Note:** Smith, "History of Printing," 215.

Articles in Periodicals

Journal articles and magazine articles are essential sources for up-to-date research. Accurate citation ensures readers can find these often-specialized resources.

Journal Article:

- **Full Note:** Michael Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," trans. Rupert Emerson, *Social Science Information* 10, no. 2 (1971): 15.
- **Short Note:** Foucault, "Order of Discourse," 15.

Magazine Article:

- **Full Note:** David Brooks, "The American Dream, Revisited," *The Atlantic*, October 2022, 55.
- **Short Note:** Brooks, "American Dream, Revisited," 55.

Websites and Online Sources

The digital landscape presents unique citation challenges. Chicago style provides guidance for citing web pages, online articles, and other digital content.

Web Page:

- **Full Note:** "The Great Chicago Fire," Chicago History Museum, accessed October 26, 2023, <https://www.chicagohistory.org/great-chicago-fire>.
- **Short Note:** "Great Chicago Fire."

Note: If the author or title is not readily apparent, use the name of the organization or website as the author. For recurring websites like news sites, a short note might simply be the title of the article if it's distinctive.

Online Article with DOI:

- **Full Note:** Sarah Johnson, "The Impact of Social Media on Political Discourse," *Journal of Digital Studies* 15, no. 3 (2021): 78-92, doi:10.1080/12345678.2021.987654.
- **Short Note:** Johnson, "Social Media on Political Discourse," 85.

Audiovisual Materials

Citing films, interviews, and other audiovisual materials requires specific formatting to capture the relevant details.

Film:

- **Full Note:** *Citizen Kane*, directed by Orson Welles, RKO Pictures, 1941, DVD.
- **Short Note:** *Citizen Kane*.

Interview:

- **Full Note:** Interview with Maria Rodriguez, Chicago, IL, October 20, 2023.
- **Short Note:** Interview with Maria Rodriguez.

Special Cases and Considerations

Beyond the standard source types, Chicago style footnote writing guide addresses various special circumstances and nuances that writers may encounter. These include the use of "ibid." and understanding when notes are preferred over a bibliography.

ibid. and Subsequent References

The Latin abbreviation "ibid." (short for *ibidem*, meaning "in the same place") is used to refer to a source cited immediately preceding it. It simplifies citations when you're referencing the exact same source multiple times consecutively. If the page number changes, you can include it after "ibid.".

- **Example:**

1. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003), 45.
2. Ibid., 46.
3. Ibid., 45-47.

When a different source is cited between references to the same work, you must use the short note format instead of "ibid.".

Punctuation and Formatting

Precision in punctuation is vital for Chicago style footnotes. Commas, periods, and quotation marks all play a specific role. Titles of books and journals are italicized, while titles of articles and chapters are enclosed in quotation marks. Pay close attention to the placement of the superscript footnote number – it typically follows the punctuation of the sentence or clause it refers to.

Key punctuation conventions include:

- A period at the end of every full note.
- Commas separating author's name, title, and publication details.
- A comma after the author's last name in short notes.
- Page numbers preceded by a comma.

When to Use Notes vs. Bibliography

In the notes-and-bibliography system, a bibliography is almost always required at the end of the document. This bibliography lists all the sources cited in the text, providing a comprehensive overview of the research. The primary distinction is that the bibliography entries are alphabetized by the author's last name and generally lack page numbers unless the source itself is a collection of pages (like a specific report).

Footnotes are for in-text citations and can also be used for supplementary material. Bibliographies are for listing all consulted sources. Even if you only use a source once, it should appear in the bibliography. The notes offer granular detail and immediate access to the source for the reader, while the bibliography provides a broader research landscape.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Despite clear guidelines, writers often make common errors when constructing Chicago style footnotes. Being aware of these pitfalls can significantly improve the accuracy and

professionalism of your citations.

- **Inconsistent Formatting:** Failing to maintain a consistent style for all your citations, especially between full and short notes, or across different source types.
- **Incorrect Punctuation:** Misplacing commas, periods, or quotation marks can render a citation unclear or incorrect according to CMOS.
- **Missing Essential Information:** Omitting crucial details like publisher, publication year, or specific page numbers in full notes.
- **Overuse or Misuse of Ibid.:** Using "ibid." when the preceding citation is not for the immediately preceding source, or failing to use it when appropriate.
- **Incorrect Order of Elements:** Not following the prescribed order for author, title, publication details, and page numbers.
- **Failure to Italicize or Use Quotation Marks Correctly:** Incorrectly formatting titles of books, journals, articles, or chapters.
- **Placing the Footnote Number Incorrectly:** Attaching the superscript number before rather than after the punctuation it relates to.

Careful proofreading against the Chicago Manual of Style or a reputable guide is essential for avoiding these common errors and ensuring your citations are impeccable.

The Role of the Bibliography in Chicago Style

While this guide focuses on footnotes, it's crucial to remember their integral relationship with the bibliography. The bibliography serves as a cumulative list of all sources that have been cited within the text. Each entry in the bibliography provides the full bibliographic information for a source, allowing readers to easily locate it. The notes, conversely, point the reader to specific locations within those sources. Together, the footnotes and the bibliography form a robust system for academic attribution and source verification, underpinning the credibility of your work.

FAQ

Q: What is the primary difference between a Chicago style footnote and an endnote?

A: The primary difference lies in their placement. Footnotes are placed at the bottom of the page where the citation is made, while endnotes are compiled at the end of the document, chapter, or entire work. Both serve the same purpose of referencing sources.

Q: When should I use a full note versus a short note in Chicago style?

A: You use a full note for the very first time you cite a particular source in your text. All subsequent citations of that same source should use the short note format.

Q: How do I cite a source that has multiple authors in Chicago style footnotes?

A: For two authors, list both names in the footnote (e.g., John Smith and Jane Doe). For three or more authors, list only the first author's name followed by "et al." (e.g., John Smith et al.).

Q: What is the correct way to cite a website that doesn't have an author listed?

A: If no author is listed, you typically begin the footnote with the title of the web page or article. If no clear title is present, you can use the name of the organization or website responsible for the content.

Q: Should I include the URL for all online sources in Chicago style footnotes?

A: Yes, generally, for online sources, the URL should be included. For articles with DOIs, it is often preferred to include the DOI instead of or in addition to the URL.

Q: How do I cite a quotation from a source that has been translated?

A: In a full note, you typically include the original author, the title of the work, the translator's name, the publication details, and the page number. For example: Author, Title, trans. Translator (Place: Publisher, Year), Page.

Q: Is it acceptable to use "ibid." when citing sources

from different editions of the same book?

A: No, "ibid." should only be used when referring to the immediately preceding citation, and that citation must be for the exact same source and edition. If the edition changes, even if it's the same work, you should use a short note.

Q: How do I reference a source that I consulted but did not directly cite in the text?

A: Chicago style's notes-and-bibliography system generally only requires notes for sources that are directly cited. However, a bibliography should list all sources consulted for the research, even if not explicitly cited in the text.

Q: What is the correct punctuation for a Chicago style footnote?

A: Punctuation varies slightly by source type, but generally, commas separate elements like author and title, and a period ends the full note. Titles of books and journals are italicized, while article titles are in quotation marks.

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