

chicago style how to cite

Understanding Chicago Style Citation: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago style how to cite is a critical skill for students, researchers, and academics across numerous disciplines. This widely adopted citation method, often referred to as the Turabian style when adapted for student papers, provides a robust framework for acknowledging sources and preventing plagiarism. Mastering its nuances ensures the credibility of your work and allows readers to easily locate the original information you've referenced. This guide will delve into the core components of Chicago style, covering both the author-date and notes-bibliography systems, providing detailed instructions for common source types. We will explore the intricacies of creating bibliographies, footnotes, and endnotes, offering practical examples to illuminate the process. Understanding how to correctly format citations is not merely about adhering to a stylistic convention; it's about engaging in scholarly discourse ethically and effectively.

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The Two Systems: Notes-Bibliography vs. Author-Date

Chicago style offers two distinct systems for citation, each suited to different academic needs and preferences. Understanding the fundamental differences between them is the first step in applying Chicago style correctly to your work. The choice of system often depends on the field of study, the specific publication guidelines, or the instructor's requirements.

The Notes-Bibliography System

The notes-bibliography system is prevalent in the humanities, including literature, history, and the arts. It relies on numbered footnotes or endnotes to cite sources within the text. Each footnote or endnote provides a complete or shortened citation for the source being referenced. A comprehensive bibliography listing all cited sources in alphabetical order appears at the end of the paper. This system allows for detailed commentary or supplementary information within the notes themselves, in addition to bibliographic data.

The Author-Date System

The author-date system is more commonly found in the social sciences and some natural sciences. In this system, parenthetical in-text citations are used, typically including the author's last name and the year of publication, along with a page number if applicable. For example, (Smith 2020, 145). This method is generally considered more concise for in-text referencing. Like the notes-bibliography system, it also requires a reference list at the end of the paper that includes all sources cited in the text, arranged alphabetically by author's last name.

Core Elements of a Chicago Style Citation

Regardless of which system you employ, certain core pieces of information are essential for constructing an accurate Chicago style citation. These elements help readers identify and locate the source material. Consistency in providing these details is paramount for clear and effective academic communication.

Essential Information Components

The specific components required for a citation vary based on the source type, but generally, they include:

- Author(s) or Editor(s)
- Title of the work
- Publication information (place of publication, publisher, year)
- Page numbers (for specific references)
- Title of the larger work (if the source is part of a collection or journal)
- Date of access (for online sources)
- URL or DOI (for online sources)

Crafting the Bibliography

The bibliography, or reference list, is a cornerstone of Chicago style. It provides a complete, alphabetized compilation of all the sources you have consulted and cited in your paper. Proper formatting ensures that readers can easily find the original works. The way entries are structured depends on whether you are using the notes-bibliography system or the author-date system.

Bibliography Formatting in Notes-Bibliography System

In the notes-bibliography system, the bibliography entries are typically presented in a single, alphabetized list at the end of the document. The formatting for individual entries closely mirrors that of the first footnote or endnote for the same source, though some minor differences may exist for brevity

and consistency within the bibliography itself. For example, author names are listed with the last name first, followed by the first name, in contrast to how they might appear in a footnote for subsequent citations.

Bibliography Formatting in Author-Date System

The author-date system's reference list is also an alphabetized compilation of sources. Each entry typically begins with the author's last name, followed by the publication year. The structure of each entry is designed to be easily searchable and informative, providing all necessary details for retrieval.

Mastering Footnotes and Endnotes

Footnotes and endnotes are the distinguishing features of the notes-bibliography system. They serve to identify sources within the text, allowing for a cleaner prose by keeping extensive citation details out of the main body of the paper. The specific information included in each note depends on whether it is the first citation of a source or a subsequent one.

First Footnote/Endnote Citation

The first time a source is cited in a note, it requires a full bibliographic entry. This provides all the necessary information for a reader to locate the source. The format will vary based on the type of source, but it will generally include author, title, publication details, and page number(s).

Subsequent Footnote/Endnote Citations

For any subsequent citations of the same source within the same paper, a shortened note format is used. This typically includes the author's last name, a shortened title of the work, and the relevant page number(s). This convention avoids redundancy and keeps the notes concise.

Placement of Notes

Footnotes appear at the bottom of the page where the citation is referenced in the text. Endnotes, on the other hand, are compiled at the end of the paper, typically after the main body and before the bibliography. The choice between footnotes and endnotes is often a matter of stylistic preference or publisher requirements.

Citing Books in Chicago Style

Books are among the most common sources used in academic writing. Chicago style provides specific guidelines for citing them, ensuring that all essential publication details are included. Whether you're citing a single-author monograph, an edited collection, or a chapter within a book, proper citation is crucial.

Single-Author Book

For a single-author book in a footnote/endnote:

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

For example: Jane Doe, *The History of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022), 75.

In the bibliography (notes-bibliography system):

Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book*. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year.

For example: Doe, Jane. *The History of Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022.

For the author-date system, the in-text citation would be (Doe 2022, 75), and the reference list entry would be similar to the bibliography entry above, often with the year placed immediately after the author's name: Doe, Jane. 2022. *The History of Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Edited Book

For an edited book in a footnote/endnote:

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

For example: John Smith, ed., *Essays on Urban Development* (New York: Academic Press, 2021), 32.

In the bibliography (notes-bibliography system):

Last Name, First Name, ed. *Title of Book*. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year.

For example: Smith, John, ed. *Essays on Urban Development*. New York: Academic Press, 2021.

Chapter or Essay in an Edited Book

For a chapter or essay in an edited book in a footnote/endnote:

Author's First Name Last Name, "Title of Chapter," in *Title of Book*, ed. Editor's First Name Last Name (Place of Publication: Publisher, Year), Page Number.

For example: Mary Jones, "The Architecture of the Loop," in *Chicago Landmarks*, ed. David Lee (Chicago: City Publications, 2019), 112.

In the bibliography (notes-bibliography system):

Last Name, First Name. "Title of Chapter." In *Title of Book*, edited by Editor's First Name Last Name, Page Range of Chapter. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year.

For example: Jones, Mary. "The Architecture of the Loop." In *Chicago Landmarks*, edited by David Lee, 105–125. Chicago: City Publications, 2019.

Citing Journal Articles in Chicago Style

Journal articles are a vital source of current research. Chicago style provides clear instructions for citing these, ensuring proper attribution of scholarly work. Accuracy in detailing volume, issue, and page numbers is key.

Journal Article with DOI

For a journal article with a DOI in a footnote/endnote:

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

For example: Emily Carter, "The Impact of Public Art," *Journal of Urban Studies* 15, no. 3 (2020): 45, doi:10.1080/12345678.2020.1234567.

In the bibliography (notes-bibliography system):

Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." *Title of Journal* Volume, no. Issue (Year): Page Number. doi: DOI Number.

For example: Carter, Emily. "The Impact of Public Art." *Journal of Urban Studies* 15, no. 3 (2020): 45–60. doi:10.1080/12345678.2020.1234567.

Journal Article Without DOI (Print)

For a print journal article without a DOI in a footnote/endnote:

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

For example: Robert Green, "Early Chicago Commerce," *Midwestern Historical Review* 42, no. 1 (2018): 210.

In the bibliography (notes-bibliography system):

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

For example: Green, Robert. "Early Chicago Commerce." *Midwestern Historical Review* 42, no. 1 (2018): 205–230.

Citing Websites and Online Sources

The digital landscape offers a vast array of information. Citing websites and online articles requires attention to access dates and URLs to ensure the source remains traceable. Chicago style adapts to

the dynamic nature of online content.

Webpage or Online Article

For a webpage or online article in a footnote/endnote:

Author's First Name Last Name, "Title of Webpage," *Title of Website*, Publication Date (if available), accessed Month Day, Year, URL.

For example: Sarah White, "Navigating the Magnificent Mile," *Chicago Travel Guide*, published July 15, 2023, accessed October 26, 2023, <https://www.chicagotravelguide.com/magnificent-mile>.

In the bibliography (notes-bibliography system):

Last Name, First Name. "Title of Webpage." *Title of Website*. Publication Date (if available). Accessed Month Day, Year. URL.

For example: White, Sarah. "Navigating the Magnificent Mile." *Chicago Travel Guide*. Published July 15, 2023. Accessed October 26, 2023. <https://www.chicagotravelguide.com/magnificent-mile>.

Online News Article

For an online news article in a footnote/endnote:

Author's First Name Last Name, "Title of Article," *Name of Newspaper*, Publication Date, accessed Month Day, Year, URL.

For example: Mark Johnson, "New Developments in City Planning," *Chicago Tribune*, October 20, 2023, accessed October 26, 2023, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/city-planning>.

In the bibliography (notes-bibliography system):

Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." *Name of Newspaper*. Publication Date. Accessed Month Day, Year. URL.

For example: Johnson, Mark. "New Developments in City Planning." *Chicago Tribune*. October 20, 2023. Accessed October 26, 2023. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/city-planning>.

Citing Other Common Source Types

Beyond books and articles, academic research often involves a variety of other source materials. Chicago style offers guidance for these as well, ensuring a comprehensive approach to citation.

Government Documents

Government documents require specific formatting that often includes the issuing agency, title, and publication details. The exact structure can vary depending on the type of document (report, law, etc.).

Dissertations and Theses

When citing dissertations or theses, you'll need to include information such as the author, title, degree, institution, and year of completion. For unpublished works, details about its availability (e.g., through a university library or database) should be provided.

Interviews

For interviews, whether published or unpublished, it's important to note the interviewee, interviewer (if applicable), date, and the location or means of access (e.g., personal collection, archival material, published in a book or journal).

Audiovisual Materials

Citing films, videos, or podcasts involves identifying the creator, title, production company or distributor,

and year. For specific references, the time frame within the media should be indicated.

Common Citation Errors to Avoid

Even with a detailed guide, certain pitfalls can lead to citation errors. Awareness of these common mistakes can help you produce more accurate and polished work, enhancing your credibility as a scholar.

Inconsistent Formatting

One of the most frequent errors is inconsistency in formatting across different citations or even within the same citation type. This includes variations in capitalization, punctuation, and the order of elements. Strict adherence to the style guide's rules for each element is crucial.

Missing Essential Information

Failing to include all necessary components for a citation—such as the author, title, publisher, or page number—can render a citation incomplete and unhelpful. Always double-check that every required piece of information is present for each source type.

Incorrect Page Number Referencing

When citing specific information, providing the correct page number(s) is vital. For footnotes and endnotes, this is a non-negotiable element. In the author-date system, including page numbers in in-text citations when quoting directly or referring to specific passages is standard practice.

Misinterpreting Source Types

Different source types (books, articles, websites) require distinct citation formats. Misclassifying a source or applying the wrong format will lead to inaccuracies. Thoroughly understanding the characteristics of each source you use is key to correct citation.

Over-Reliance on Online Generators Without Review

While citation generators can be helpful tools, they are not infallible. Errors in input or the generator's algorithms can produce incorrect citations. It is essential to always review and verify the output of any citation generator against the official Chicago Manual of Style guidelines.

FAQ

Q: What is the main difference between the notes-bibliography system and the author-date system in Chicago style?

A: The primary difference lies in how sources are cited within the text. The notes-bibliography system uses numbered footnotes or endnotes for citations, while the author-date system uses parenthetical in-text citations that include the author's last name and the year of publication. Both systems conclude with a comprehensive list of all cited sources at the end of the paper.

Q: When should I use the notes-bibliography system versus the author-date system?

A: The notes-bibliography system is generally favored in the humanities (literature, history, arts), allowing for more detailed explanatory notes. The author-date system is more common in the social

and natural sciences, where conciseness in in-text citations is often preferred. Always check your instructor's or publisher's guidelines, as they will specify which system to use.

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

A: For two authors, list both names in the citation, separated by "and." For three or more authors, list the first author's name followed by "et al." (an abbreviation for "and others"). This applies to both footnotes/endnotes and the bibliography/reference list, though specific formatting nuances may exist between systems.

Q: What is the purpose of a DOI in Chicago style citations?

A: DOI stands for Digital Object Identifier. It is a unique alphanumeric string assigned to a digital object, such as a journal article, that ensures its permanent location on the internet. Including the DOI in your citation makes it easier for readers to find the specific version of the online source you consulted, especially if URLs change over time.

Q: How do I format a website citation if there is no author listed?

A: If no author is listed for a website, begin the citation with the title of the specific webpage. If there is no title for the webpage, use a descriptive title in brackets, such as [Homepage]. Follow the Chicago Manual of Style guidelines for the remaining elements, such as the website title, publication date (if available), access date, and URL.

Q: What is the difference between a bibliography and a reference list in Chicago style?

A: In the notes-bibliography system, the list of all sources consulted is called a bibliography. In the author-date system, this same list is referred to as a reference list. While their content is similar (all cited sources), the term "bibliography" can sometimes encompass sources consulted but not directly

cited, whereas a reference list strictly includes only those sources that appear in the in-text citations. However, for practical purposes in Chicago style, both serve as the terminal list of sources.

Q: Do I need to include page numbers for every citation?

A: Page numbers are essential when quoting directly from a source or when referencing specific ideas or data from a particular page or range of pages. For general references to a work (like citing an entire book or article), page numbers are typically not required in the in-text citation or footnote/endnote. However, for the notes-bibliography system, the bibliography entry itself does not usually include page numbers, but the initial footnote/endnote citation for a specific passage will.

Q: How do I cite a book if I don't know the publication date?

A: If a publication date for a book is unknown, you can use "n.d." (no date) in place of the year in your citation. This is standard practice for indicating the absence of a known publication date in Chicago style. Ensure you still include all other available publication information, such as the publisher and place of publication.

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