Crash Course in Chicago Style:

Documentation for Academic Writing

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History 151

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So you’ve just been assigned a ka-jillion paged essay in Chicago format. Breathe. You’ve got a couple different ways you may choose to handle this. You could scream profanities and vow to put the least amount of effort into learning this documentation style or find some website that’ll do it for you (which rarely ever does the job correctly). You could choose to sulk into a deep pit of despair and eat a giant tub of Ben and Jerry’s to drown out your anxieties about this “Chicago” style. Or, you can simply keep reading this document and get a sufficient and brief understanding of how to write your paper in Chicago.

Different disciplines require different documentation styles for consistency. Chicago, for example, is often used in history. Chicago actually shares some similarities to MLA and APA style. Learning these documentation styles is very important as anytime you borrow ideas or use information to support your own, you must cite your sources. Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers, in their documentation manual guide, A Pocket Style Manual, provide two reasons why we always need to cite our sources. They explain that, “when you cite sources, you give credit to writers from whom you’ve borrowed words and ideas. You also let your readers know where your information comes from so that they can evaluate the original source.” For example, anytime you use another source’s direct words, they must be enclosed with quotation marks. If you wish to paraphrase information from a source, you must completely reword the information, using your own language and style. Whether you use direct language or paraphrased information from a source, all information that is not innately yours, must be cited in a Chicago footnote. If you do not cite your direct quotations or paraphrased information, you

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are plagiarizing. The consequences of plagiarism are many: a failure for the assignment, course, or expulsion from the university. Just as there is a right way to document sources, there is a right way to incorporate them as well: use direct quotes sparingly. Paraphrase source information unless you cannot say it better yourself or it is a particularly striking passage. Remember, too, to keep your secondary sources secondary. Information from other sources is used to support your arguments, not to convey your arguments for you.

One of the main characteristics that distinguishes Chicago from APA and MLA is its usage of footnotes rather than parenthetical citations. For example, in MLA, we cite a source with an author’s last name and a page number enclosed in parenthetical citations like this: (Johnson 26). But in Chicago, we cite our information with a number at the end of the sentence. Using footnotes instead of parenthetical citations, as stated on Yale’s Writing Center website, “allows the reader to focus on the evidence instead of being distracted by the publication information evidence.” Even though it looks intimidating at first, you might find that you actually prefer Chicago style over other styles because of its clean look. Once you insert your footnote, Word will automatically insert a space for the source at the end of the page. However, keep in mind that the publication information at the end of each page functions as brief bibliographic references. These references are secondary to the complete publication information provided on the bibliography page itself.

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3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 213.
5 Yale College Writing Center, Yale College, last modified 2011, http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/why-are-there-different-citation-styles.
6 Yale College Writing Center, 2011.

Yale College Writing Center. Yale College. Last modified 2011. 
http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/why-are-there-different-citation-styles.
Brief Guide to Chicago Documentation

The Chicago Manual of Style requires source treatment similar to more familiar styles like APA and MLA:

- Direct language from sources must be enclosed in quotation marks.
- Paraphrases and summaries must be rewritten completely in your own language and style.
- Any time you use words or ideas from a source, you must cite them in-text (in a note) and in the bibliography.
- Present-tense signal phrases are used to introduce summaries and paraphrases to alert readers to the move to source information. Ex. According to John Smith,
- No citation is needed for information considered to be common knowledge.

Chicago differs from APA and MLA in one major way: instead of using parenthetical citations, we use notes:

Jillian Cruze claims that the newest technologies only “serve to reduce the public into a mass consciousness; they take away agency, identity, and voice.” For example, while it may appear that identities are “constructed through personal Twitter pages,” forcing messages into 140 characters tends to produce a language of absence, lacking in detail and description, and ultimately voice.  

(see footnote at bottom of page)

Incorporating Sources in Chicago Style

- **Use quotations sparingly.** You should remain the primary voice in your paper. Use quotations or hybrid-quotations only when the original passage cannot be restated sufficiently.

- **Use ellipses to indicate omission.** To modify a passage for only its salient points, use ellipses to indicate omitted words. Below, the ellipses indicate that information has been removed between the two statements:

Cruze argues that in the 21st century, it seems that the more technology is used to “reproduce or mimic reality,” the less individuals actually participate in real life...For example, Facebook, reality TV shows, video games: all of these reproduce some form of ‘reality,’ yet often require us to experience it in isolation from the couch or from behind a computer screen.

- **Use brackets to clarify information in quotations.** It might be necessary to modify or clarify a quote at times, whether to change tense or capitalization or to provide additional information for clarity. When you must do this, use brackets around the modified material. If a typo or misspelling exists in the original text, note it with an italicized [sic].

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Jillian Cruze claims that the newest technologies only “serve to reduce the public into a mass consciousness; [the technologies] take away agency, identity, and voice.” For example, while it may appear that identities are “construct [sic] through personal Twitter pages,” forcing messages into 140 characters tends to produce a language of absence, lacking in detail and description, and ultimately voice.⁹

- **Use a block quotation for quotes of ten lines or more.** You are allowed to use block quote formatting for five or more lines, but are required to use it for ten+. Block quotes are indented once (five spaces) and are introduced by a lead-in sentence with a colon.

- **For the first use of a source, include a full-length note.** All publication information is required for the first use of a source. After this initial note, you supply a shortened version. (See footnote 2 above) If you have two consecutive notes (with no other sources between them), use “Ibid” to indicate the repetition, along with the page number. If the information is from the same page, the second note will read only “Ibid.” (See footnote 3)

- **The first line of notes is indented 5 spaces.** Second and subsequent lines are flush with the left margin. Bibliography citations are similar to APA and MLA: the second and subsequent lines are indented.

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**Common Sources: Notes and Bibliography Citations**

**BOOK**

Note:


Bibliography Entry:


**ONLINE BOOK**

Note:


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⁹. Ibid.
Bibliography Entry:

TWO OR THREE AUTHORS
Note:

Bibliography Entry:

FOUR OR MORE AUTHORS
Note:

Bibliography Entry:

UNKNOWN AUTHOR
Note:
5. The Handbook on Academic Writing (Boston: St. Martin’s, 1999), 357.

Bibliography Entry:
MULTIPLE WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR: use six hyphens in place of the author’s name after the first entry.

Bibliography Entry:


EDITED WORK WITH OR WITHOUT AN AUTHOR

Note:


Bibliography Entry:


Bibliography Entry:

TRANSLATED WORK

Note:


Bibliography Entry:
SELECTION IN AN ANTHOLOGY OR CHAPTER IN A BOOK

Note:


Bibliography Entry:

INDIRECT SOURCE (source quoted in another source)

Note:


Bibliography Entry:

ARTICLE IN A PRINT JOURNAL

Note:


Bibliography Entry:
JOURNAL ARTICLE FROM A DATABASE

For database materials, if the DIO number is available, provide it after the page citation instead of the database name and stable URL.

Note:


Bibliography Entry:

ARTICLE IN A PRINT MAGAZINE

Note:


Bibliography Entry:

MAGAZINE ARTICLE FROM A DATABASE

When working with databases, you can provide the DOI number, the database and the stable URL, or the database and its accession number. The accession number is used below.

Note:


Bibliography Entry:
ARTICLE IN A PRINT NEWSPAPER

Note:


Bibliography Entry:

WEBSITE: WHOLE SITE AND ARTICLE

For websites, provide the author, the title of the site, the sponsor, the date of late update, and the URL.

Note:


Bibliography Entry:

Note:


Bibliography Entry:
GOVERNMENT DOCUMENT

Note:


Bibliography Entry:


PERSONAL COMMUNICATION (Interview)  (only included in notes, not in bibliography)


LECTURE NOTES

Note:


Bibliography Entry: