Chicago Manual of Style: Quick Tips for Footnotes and Endnotes

Although Chicago style can appear intimidating, it’s nothing more than a comprehensive guide for writing within the humanities and liberal arts.

Why footnotes and endnotes?
1. Footnotes are convenient. Say you’re reading a history paper (where CMS is primarily used) and you encounter a source that you find interesting or want to know more about. Placing the source’s information at the end of the page is convenient to the reader. The author of a paper may also want to remark on a source, idea, or term, but it’s not important enough to put in the text of the paper; in this case, a footnote would be useful.
2. Endnotes differ if you want to use footnotes but don’t find them aesthetically pleasing (crowding out each page), and decide to place them at the end of the document where every source used, from first to last, is in a single place.
3. Some professors require their students to use both footnotes (citing the sources they used, when they used them) and a bibliography (documenting sources they collected, whether they used them or not). In those cases, keep a few distinctions in mind:
   a. In footnote citations, items of the citation itself are separated by commas: however, those commas turn into periods once in the bibliography.
   b. Also, footnotes have a first/last name order of the author’s name, whereas it is reversed in bibliography.
   c. Publishing information, like publishing city, publishing company, and date, are encased in parentheses in a footnote but not so in the bibliography.

Examples

Word to the wise on consecutive and/or multiple citations:

If you cite a source in one footnote for a section, and you keep citing the same source, and same page, just place “Ibid.” (Latin for “in the same place”) in subsequent citations. But if you cite the same source with a different page number, use “Ibid.” and follow it by the page number.

When you first cite a source, include all elements of the citation. In subsequent footnote citations (not directly following it), simply include the author’s last name, and a shortened form of the title (often just keywords, i.e., not articles/function words).

Since Chicago Manual of Style (CMS) is the go-to style of historians, we’ll include two other footnote citation examples: journal articles and database materials.

John David Bladek, “‘Virginia Is Middle Ground’: The Know Nothing Party and the Virginia Gubernatorial Election of 1855,” The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 106, no. 1 (1998), 35-70, accessed September 22, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4249690. (In citing journal articles, don’t forget to include the volume number after the journal’s title, in addition to the date accessed before the article URL).

Daniel Ullmann, Amendments to the Constitution of the United States: Non-sectarian And Universal Education, New York: Baker & Godwin, 1876, 4. HathiTrust (Side note: this is archival material retrieved from our library database, but your professor will specify whether you need to include the database name or a stable URL).
CMS Reference Format and Style Quirks

In the Chicago Manual of Style, there are two methods of citation, depending upon the field in which you’re writing. A common approach in liberal arts, specifically in history, is to use footnotes/endnotes. The second approach (meant for more science-oriented disciplines) is to cite sources according to author-date.

The way we cite sources in text is an indication of the importance we place on certain information. In the case of footnotes, we value the whole source for its historical information, and what we might learn from the author, title, publisher, or publication date. As historians, we want all of the information.

If we’re using author date references, we value the author’s last name and the year of publication. Since the sciences are primarily concentrated on peer reviewed journals, we want to know the author’s name, but more importantly how recent the article was published. The more recent the article, the more relevant its issues, research methods, etc.

Here are the basic principles of author-date system:

1. Author-date in-text citations in CMS are similar to APA in-text citations: (Drew 2016), or if the author is mentioned in-sentence, “Drew (2016) states. . .”
2. When citing a particular page number, include the page number in the parenthetical citation: (Drew 2016, 195). If an online source has no pagination, insert the paragraph or chapter number if there is one.
3. Since author-date is used for more scientific or technical writing, you’ll be using primarily books, reports, and above all, journal articles.
4. For a journal article, the source information in the bibliography would be ordered as: Author (last, first). Date of Publication. Article title (in quotations). Journal title (in italics). Volume (Issue): Page Number. Doi (digital object identifier) or URL.
5. The citation for the above example would go as follows: Drew, Erin. 2016. “‘Tis Prudence To Prevent Th’entire Decay’: Usufruct And Environmental Thought.” *Eighteenth century thought.* 49 (2): 195.
7. Parenthetical citations of the above book would follow the first rule and be cited as (Dawkins 2012).