

chicago manual of style bibliography examples for government documents

Chicago Manual of Style Bibliography Examples for Government Documents: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago manual of style bibliography examples for government documents can present unique challenges for researchers due to the vast and varied nature of government publications. Ensuring accuracy and adherence to the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) is crucial for academic integrity and proper citation. This guide delves into the specific requirements for citing federal, state, and local government documents, offering clear examples and explanations. We will explore the nuances of citing reports, legislation, court decisions, and other official publications, equipping you with the knowledge to confidently navigate these complexities. Understanding the formatting distinctions for different types of government documents is key to creating a professional and accurate bibliography.

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Understanding the Core Principles of Chicago Style for Government Documents

The Chicago Manual of Style, in its 17th edition, provides a framework for citing a wide array of sources, including government documents. The fundamental principle remains consistent: provide enough information for your reader to locate the source easily. For government documents, this often involves identifying the issuing agency, the title of the document, its publication date, and any specific identifiers like report numbers or session laws. The complexity arises from the hierarchical nature of government and the varying levels of detail required for different types of publications.

When approaching government documents, it's important to remember that they are often authored by an organization rather than an individual. CMOS accommodates this by treating the responsible government agency or department as the author. The specific order of elements—author, title, publication information—will be influenced by the nature of the document and whether it's part of a

series or a standalone publication. Consistency in applying these rules throughout your bibliography is paramount.

Citing Federal Government Documents

Federal government documents are a cornerstone for many research projects, particularly in fields like political science, law, and history. Citing them accurately according to the Chicago Manual of Style requires attention to detail regarding the issuing agency and the specific publication type.

Reports and Publications

For reports and general publications issued by federal agencies, the primary author is the agency itself. The title should be italicized. If there's a specific sub-agency or office responsible, it can be included. Key bibliographic information typically includes the agency name, the full title of the report (italicized), the publication date, and often a report number or series designation if available.

Here's a general template:

- Agency Name. *Title of Report*. Publication Date. Report Number (if applicable).

Example:

- United States. Department of Commerce. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. *Climate Change Impacts on the United States*. 2022. NOAA Technical Report NESDIS 153.

In cases where a more specific office or bureau is the issuer, it should be included to provide greater clarity. The structure aims to lead the reader from the broad governmental entity down to the specific document.

Legislation and Congressional Documents

Citing federal legislation and congressional documents follows a distinct pattern. Laws are typically cited by their common name or Public Law number, followed by the date they were enacted. Congressional documents, such as committee reports or hearings, are identified by their issuing committee, the title, and Congress session information.

For Public Laws, the citation format often includes the Congress number and the Public Law number.

Example (Public Law):

- Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Public Law 111-148, 124 Stat. 119 (2010).

Congressional reports and documents are usually attributed to the Congress and session, followed by the committee and the report or document number.

Example (Congressional Report):

- United States. Congress. House. Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.
Investigating Waste, Fraud, and Abuse in Federal Contracting. 112th Cong., 1st sess., 2011. H. Rept. 112-300.

Hearings are cited similarly, indicating the committee, the hearing title, and the Congress and session.

Court Decisions and Legal Filings

Citing federal court decisions, particularly those from the Supreme Court, requires specific formats that are often detailed in CMOS. The official reporter system is crucial here. For Supreme Court cases, you cite the case name, volume and reporter abbreviation, and the starting page number, followed by the year.

Example (Supreme Court Case):

- *Marbury v. Madison*, 5 U.S. (1 Cranch) 137 (1803).

Lower federal court decisions follow similar principles, referencing the appropriate reporter series for that court (e.g., Federal Reporter, Federal Supplement).

Example (Federal Court of Appeals Case):

- *United States v. Jones*, 662 F.3d 731 (D.C. Cir. 2011).

Citing State Government Documents

State government documents, like their federal counterparts, are issued by various agencies and legislative bodies. The principles for citation remain consistent with CMOS, but the specific names of agencies and legislative structures will differ from state to state.

State Agency Reports

Similar to federal reports, state agency reports are attributed to the issuing state agency. The title is italicized, followed by the publication year. It's important to clearly identify the state, followed by the department or agency.

Example:

- California. Department of Public Health. *California Health Disparities Report*. 2021.

If a report is issued by a more specific division or office within a department, include that for greater precision. The goal is to enable the reader to trace the document back to its origin within the state's governmental structure.

State Legislation and Court Decisions

State legislation is cited by the statute number or bill number, the name of the act (if it has one), and the year. State court decisions follow the same logic as federal courts, referencing the official reporter for that state's court system.

Example (State Statute):

- Illinois Compiled Statutes. Chapter 625, Section 5/11-501 (2020).

Example (State Supreme Court Case):

- *People v. Smith*, 220 Ill. 2d 100 (2006).

It is crucial to consult the specific statutory codes or reporters for the relevant state to ensure accurate citation.

Citing Local Government Documents

Local government documents, such as those from cities, counties, or townships, also require careful citation. These documents can include ordinances, resolutions, and reports from local departments.

Municipal Ordinances and Resolutions

Ordinances and resolutions are foundational legal documents for local governments. They are typically cited by the name of the municipality, the ordinance or resolution number, and the year it was adopted. If the ordinance is codified within the municipal code, that can also be referenced.

Example (City Ordinance):

- City of Chicago. Municipal Code, ch. 10-8, sec. 10-8-150 (2019).

Example (County Resolution):

- Cook County. Resolution No. R20-225 (June 15, 2020).

Including the specific date of adoption, if readily available, adds further precision.

Local Government Reports

Reports from local government departments or task forces are cited in a manner similar to state and federal reports. The city or county name is followed by the department or agency, the title of the report (*italicized*), and the publication year.

Example:

- New York City. Department of City Planning. *Comprehensive Plan for New York City*. 2011.

For less formally published documents, provide as much detail as possible to ensure traceability.

Key Elements for Government Document Citations

Regardless of the level of government or document type, several key elements are consistently important for accurate Chicago Manual of Style bibliography entries for government documents. These are the building blocks of a complete and useful citation, ensuring your readers can find the information they need.

- **Issuing Agency/Body:** Clearly identify the government entity responsible for the publication. This could be a federal department, state agency, congressional committee, or local council.

- **Title:** The full, official title of the document, typically italicized.
- **Publication Date:** The year the document was published. For legislation and court cases, the enactment or decision year is crucial.
- **Specific Identifiers:** This includes document numbers, report numbers, Public Law numbers, session law citations, or reporter volume and page numbers for legal cases.
- **Location:** For local ordinances, the name of the municipality or county is essential.

The precise order and inclusion of these elements will vary based on the specific type of government document being cited, but ensuring each relevant element is present is key to CMOS compliance.

Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

Navigating the citation of government documents can be complex, and several common pitfalls can lead to errors. Being aware of these potential issues can help you produce more accurate and polished bibliographies.

- **Incomplete Agency Identification:** Failing to specify the full agency name or level of government (e.g., just saying "Department of Justice" instead of "United States. Department of Justice"). Always provide the most specific issuing entity possible.
- **Incorrect Title Formatting:** Not italicizing report titles or misrepresenting the official title of legislation or court cases. Double-check CMOS guidelines for title capitalization and italicization.
- **Missing Essential Identifiers:** Omitting crucial numbers like report numbers, Public Law numbers, or court reporter citations, which are vital for retrieval.
- **Confusing Federal, State, and Local Documents:** Applying citation patterns for one level of government to another, leading to inaccuracies. Each level has its unique conventions.
- **Over-reliance on Informal Sources:** Citing government documents found on less authoritative websites without verifying the official publication details. Always try to locate the official publication.

By carefully reviewing your citations against the principles outlined in the Chicago Manual of Style and paying close attention to the specific details of each document, you can effectively avoid these common mistakes and ensure your bibliography is both accurate and professional.

FAQ

Q: What is the most common mistake when citing federal government reports in Chicago style?

A: The most common mistake is failing to adequately identify the issuing agency. Researchers often omit the specific department or sub-agency, making it difficult for readers to locate the report. Always include the full name of the federal department and any specific bureau or office responsible for the publication.

Q: How do I cite a government document that has no clear author or issuing agency listed?

A: When a specific agency is not readily apparent, CMOS generally advises treating the title of the document as the author if no other entity is responsible. However, for government documents, there is almost always an issuing body, even if it's an overarching department. Exhaust all avenues to identify the responsible entity before using the title as the author.

Q: Is it necessary to include the full URL when citing online government documents in Chicago style?

A: In the 17th edition of the Chicago Manual of Style, URLs are generally included for online sources, especially if the document is not available in a print format or if its online location is the most accessible point of access. However, the emphasis is on providing enough information for retrieval, so a stable URL or DOI is preferred over a dynamic one.

Q: How does the citation for a state legislative act differ from a federal Public Law?

A: While both involve legislation, the citation format differs. Federal Public Laws are cited with their Public Law number and session. State legislative acts are typically cited by the name of the act, the codified chapter and section number, and the year, referencing the specific state's compiled statutes.

Q: When citing a government document with multiple authors, how should it be handled in a Chicago style bibliography?

A: If a government document has multiple individual authors (which is less common than agency authorship), you would list them as you would for any other source, following the standard author-listing conventions in Chicago style (e.g., listing all authors if there are three or fewer, or the first author followed by "et al." if there are more). However, most government documents are attributed to the issuing agency as a corporate author.

Q: What is the importance of including report numbers or series designations for government documents?

A: Report numbers and series designations are crucial for uniquely identifying specific government publications, especially when titles might be similar or when documents are part of a larger series. They act as vital identifiers that help researchers locate the exact document intended.

Q: Are there specific rules for citing international governmental organizations (like the UN) in Chicago style?

A: Yes, international governmental organizations are treated similarly to domestic government agencies. You cite the organization as the author, followed by the title of the document and publication details. CMOS provides specific guidance for these types of entities as well.

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