

chicago manual of style quoting plays

Understanding Chicago Manual of Style Quoting Plays: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago manual of style quoting plays is a crucial element for academics, researchers, and anyone needing to accurately and ethically incorporate dialogue or dramatic text into their written work. This guide delves into the intricacies of citing dramatic literature according to the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS), often referred to as the "bible" of academic publishing for many fields. We will explore how to properly format direct quotations from plays, including character attributions, act, scene, and line numbers, and discuss the nuances of citing specific editions. Furthermore, this article will cover strategies for integrating these quotations seamlessly into your prose and address common challenges encountered when quoting theatrical works. Mastering these techniques ensures clarity, credibility, and adherence to scholarly standards, making your arguments more persuasive and your research more robust.

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General Principles for Citing Dramatic Works

When quoting from a play, the primary goal is to provide your reader with enough information to easily locate the cited passage in the original text. The Chicago Manual of Style emphasizes clarity and consistency in its approach to citations. This means that once you establish a method for citing, you should stick to it throughout your paper. For dramatic works, this typically involves identifying the play, the author, and the specific location of the quote within the play's structure. Understanding the conventions of playwriting, such as acts, scenes, and individual lines, is fundamental to accurate citation.

The Chicago Manual of Style offers two main citation systems: the notes-bibliography system and the author-date system. While both are acceptable, the notes-bibliography system is more common in fields that frequently cite plays, such as literature, theater studies, and history. This system uses footnotes or endnotes to provide source information and is often preferred for its ability to include more detailed commentary alongside the citation.

Formatting Direct Quotations from Plays

The way you format a direct quotation from a play depends on its length and how it integrates with your own prose. Short quotations, generally considered to be fewer than four or five lines of verse or prose, are integrated directly into your text, enclosed in quotation marks. For longer quotations, they are set off from the main text as block quotations, which do not use quotation marks but are indented.

Short Quotations

When incorporating short quotations into your narrative, the text of the play should flow seamlessly with your own sentences. Punctuation that belongs to your sentence should be placed outside the quotation marks, unless it is part of the original quoted material. For example, if you are quoting a sentence that ends with a period, and it is integrated into your own sentence, you would place the closing quotation mark before your sentence's concluding punctuation. Character names are typically introduced before the spoken lines, often followed by a colon, especially when quoting dialogue directly.

Block Quotations

For quotations that exceed the established length limit (usually four or five lines of verse or prose), you should use a block quotation format. This involves indenting the entire quoted passage from the left margin, typically by half an inch or one inch, depending on your publisher's or instructor's guidelines. Block quotations are not enclosed in quotation marks. The line breaks within verse plays should be preserved to accurately represent the

original formatting. If the quotation includes more than one character speaking, you should indicate each character's name before their dialogue within the block quote.

Incorporating Dialogue into Your Text

Integrating dialogue from plays into your own writing requires careful consideration of how it supports your argument. It's not enough to simply drop a quote; you must provide context and analysis. Introduce each quotation with a sentence that explains its significance or purpose. This introductory sentence should lead smoothly into the quoted material, preparing the reader for what they are about to read and why it is important to your discussion.

After presenting a quotation, follow it with an explanation that analyzes its meaning, connects it to your thesis, or elaborates on its implications. This analytical paragraph is where you demonstrate your understanding of the play and how the specific lines contribute to your overall argument. Avoid letting quotations speak for themselves; your voice and interpretation are crucial to academic writing.

Citing Act, Scene, and Line Numbers

The most critical element of quoting plays accurately in CMOS is the consistent and precise citation of act, scene, and line numbers. This allows readers to pinpoint the exact location of the quoted material within the play. The standard format typically follows a pattern such as Act.Scene.Line(s). For example, a quote from Hamlet might be cited as 3.2.105–110, indicating Act 3, Scene 2, lines 105 through 110.

When referring to verse plays, preserving the original line breaks is important, and line numbers are usually printed in the margins of scholarly editions. For prose plays, citing act and scene is still common, but line numbers might not always be present or as consistently used. Always consult the specific edition of the play you are using, as formatting and numbering can vary. If an edition provides only act and scene, then those are the numbers you should cite.

The specific presentation of these numbers in your citation depends on whether you are using the notes-bibliography system or the author-date system. In the notes-bibliography system, the act, scene, and line numbers are usually included in the footnote or endnote, along with bibliographic information. In the author-date system, they may be included parenthetically within the text, after the quotation.

Handling Stage Directions

Stage directions are an integral part of a play's text, providing essential information about

character actions, emotions, setting, and tone. When quoting stage directions, they should be treated the same way as dialogue, enclosed in quotation marks if they are part of a short quotation, or set off as a block quote if they are lengthy. CMOS generally advises against quoting stage directions unless they are directly relevant to your argument.

If a stage direction is enclosed within the dialogue in the original text, it is usually presented in parentheses. When you are quoting this material, you should retain these parentheses. For example, if a character says, "I am so happy (clapping her hands)," you would quote it as: "I am so happy (clapping her hands)." Ensure that the stage directions you quote add value to your analysis and are not merely decorative.

Special Considerations for Different Play Formats

The format of a play can influence how you cite it. Plays written in verse, such as Shakespearean dramas, have a distinct structure with line breaks that should generally be preserved in quotations to maintain their poetic rhythm and meaning. Prose plays, on the other hand, are written in paragraph form, and while line numbers might still be present, the emphasis is on the flow of the prose.

When dealing with modern plays, you may encounter different numbering conventions. Always refer to the title page and the introductory material of your specific edition for guidance on how the play is divided and numbered. If an edition uses a unique system, it is often explained in the preface or introduction, and you should follow that system consistently.

Online versions of plays can also present challenges. If you are citing a play from a reputable online archive or database, ensure it provides clear act, scene, and line numbering. If not, you may need to note this limitation in your bibliography or through a note, and prioritize citing from a print edition if possible.

Parenthetical Citations vs. Notes

As mentioned, the Chicago Manual of Style offers two primary citation styles. The notes-bibliography system, which uses footnotes or endnotes, is highly recommended for citing plays. In this system, the first time a play is cited, a full bibliographic entry appears in a footnote or endnote, along with the act, scene, and line numbers. Subsequent citations from the same play can then be shortened to just the author's last name and the act, scene, and line numbers.

The author-date system, more common in the sciences, uses in-text parenthetical citations. For plays, this would typically include the author's last name and the act, scene, and line numbers within parentheses immediately following the quotation. For example: (Shakespeare, 3.2.105–110). This system requires a corresponding reference list at the end of the document detailing all sources cited.

Regardless of the system chosen, consistency is paramount. Whichever method you adopt, ensure it is applied uniformly throughout your work and adheres to the specific requirements of your assignment or publication.

Examples of Quoting Plays in CMOS

Here are some examples illustrating how to quote plays according to the Chicago Manual of Style, using the notes-bibliography system.

Short Quotation (Verse)

Prospero, reflecting on his power, muses, "Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie, / Which we ascribe to chance" (1.2.114-115).

Footnote: William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Stephen Orgel, *The Oxford Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 1.2.114-115.

Short Quotation (Prose)

Blanche DuBois expresses her delicate sensibilities by stating, "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers" (Williams 112).

Footnote: Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (New York: New Directions, 1947), act 1, scene 1, p. 112. (Note: Page numbers are included if the edition provides them; otherwise, cite act and scene). If using specific line numbers were available and standard for this edition, they would be included.

Block Quotation

Hamlet's contemplation of life and death is famously expressed in his soliloquy:

To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them?
(3.1.56-60)

Footnote: Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3.1.56-60.

Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

One of the most frequent errors when quoting plays is inconsistency in citation format. Whether it's the order of act, scene, and line numbers, or the punctuation used, maintaining uniformity is key. Always double-check your notes and parenthetical citations against your bibliography to ensure they match and follow CMOS guidelines precisely.

Another pitfall is the misinterpretation or awkward integration of quotations. Simply placing dialogue into your text without proper introduction, analysis, or transition can weaken your argument. Ensure that every quotation serves a purpose and is clearly explained within the context of your own writing. Avoid quoting excessively; select only the most impactful lines that directly support your points.

Furthermore, using incorrect or inconsistent editions of a play can lead to citation errors. It is vital to identify which edition you are using and to cite it accurately, including the editor, publisher, and publication year. If your instructor or publication has specific requirements regarding editions (e.g., requiring a scholarly critical edition), adhere to those guidelines strictly. When in doubt, consult the latest edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* or your instructor for clarification.

Finally, remember that the goal of quoting is to enhance your own argument, not to replace it. Your analysis and interpretation are paramount. Treat the dialogue and stage directions from plays as evidence to be examined and explained, rather than as standalone statements.

The precise formatting of quotations from plays, including the careful inclusion of act, scene, and line numbers, alongside thoughtful integration into your own prose, is essential for academic integrity and clarity. By adhering to the principles outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, writers can effectively leverage dramatic text to support their research and analysis, ensuring their work is both credible and accessible to their readers. Mastering these citation practices is a hallmark of scholarly engagement with theatrical literature.

FAQ

Q: What is the most important element when quoting dialogue from a play in Chicago Manual of Style?

A: The most crucial element when quoting dialogue from a play in the Chicago Manual of Style is the accurate and consistent citation of act, scene, and line numbers. This allows readers to locate the precise passage within the original text.

Q: How should I format a short quotation from a play if it is integrated into my own sentence?

A: Short quotations (typically under four or five lines) are integrated into your text and enclosed in quotation marks. Character attributions should be clear, and line breaks in verse plays should be preserved if they are essential to the meaning. Punctuation belonging to your sentence follows the closing quotation mark unless it is part of the original quote.

Q: When do I use a block quotation for play excerpts?

A: Block quotations are used for longer excerpts from plays, usually exceeding four or five lines of verse or prose. These quotations are set off from the main text by indenting them and are not enclosed in quotation marks.

Q: How do I cite stage directions according to the Chicago Manual of Style?

A: Stage directions are quoted like any other text from the play. If they appear in parentheses within the original dialogue, you should retain those parentheses in your quotation. They should only be quoted if they are relevant to your analysis.

Q: Should I always include page numbers when citing plays in Chicago style?

A: While act, scene, and line numbers are standard for plays, page numbers may also be included if your edition provides them and if it aids in locating the material, especially for prose plays or when quoting extensively from a specific page. Always prioritize the numbering system provided by your edition and consult CMOS guidelines.

Q: What is the difference between the notes-bibliography system and the author-date system for quoting plays?

A: The notes-bibliography system uses footnotes or endnotes for citations, which is common in humanities and literature. The author-date system uses parenthetical in-text citations (Author Year, Page) and a reference list at the end. For plays, the notes-bibliography system typically includes author, title, edition information, and act, scene, and line numbers in the notes.

Q: How do I cite a play that has multiple authors or is

translated?

A: For translated plays, you should include the original author's name, the translator's name, and the title of the play. In the notes and bibliography, list the translator's name as the primary author for citation purposes if the translation is the version you are using, but also acknowledge the original author. For plays with multiple authors, list them according to their order on the title page.

Q: What are the common errors to avoid when quoting plays in CMOS?

A: Common errors include inconsistent citation formats, awkward integration of quotes without sufficient analysis, quoting excessively, and using incorrect or inconsistent editions of the play. Always double-check your citations for accuracy and clarity.

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