

Workshop III: Footnoting your sources

So why do we footnote?

- To give readers the opportunity to check whether there's evidence for what we say
- To give readers the opportunity of using the sources we've found in their research
- To give credit where credit is due (i.e. the original author)

What do I need to footnote?

- Sources of quotes, paraphrases, arguments (NOTE: you also need to credit **ideas!**)
- It is not necessary to attribute common knowledge; i.e., if you note in your paper that the United States declared independence in 1776, that information does not need a footnote.
 - So what's common knowledge?
 - * Often geographic facts or facts related to dates (when somebody became president, which years a war lasted, what countries a river runs through, etc.)
 - * A good rule of thumb is: if you needed to check this information, would you go to a basic encyclopedia or a scholarly monograph? That is, would you run a quick Google search or go to the library database and start looking for books and articles related to the topic?
 - * That said, keep in mind that even dates or geographies can be controversial, in which case you do need to state where you got your information.

How many footnotes? When do I need them?

- While it's not pretty to have your paragraph peppered with a footnote for every sentence, it's always better to err on the side of too many than too few footnotes.
- It's always good to give page numbers where applicable (i.e., if the information comes from a specific page range in a work, as it usually does). Page numbers **must** be included with direct quotations.
- Whenever you are using somebody else's words, ideas, or research results, you need a footnote. However, when you are using one source for a longer stretch of your paper, you don't need a footnote for each sentence—one at the end of the paragraph is enough. Note that this does **not** apply if the paragraph is broken by a direct quotation—there should always be a footnote after each quotation (unless it is utterly obvious that two quotes following closely upon each other are from the same source).

- Do not combine several sources in one footnote if you can avoid it; i.e., if you can put a footnote to one source after one sentence and a footnote to another source after the next sentence, do that instead of putting both sources after both sentences.
- In a longer research paper, you may well have an introductory paragraph or two, or a conclusion, where you don't provide citations—this is where you state your argument, which consists (hopefully) of *your* ideas and interpretations. However, if you do this, you must make sure that all information (rather than argument) contained in these paragraphs has been attributed elsewhere in the paper.
- Remember, when in doubt, footnote!

Stylistic issues

- Do not quote directly if you can avoid it. Ideally, there should be a reason for each quote—a particularly felicitous turn of phrase, an illustrative excerpt from a primary source, a very succinct description of facts. You should not use quotes simply to make writing faster or easier; doing so only reveals that you haven't digested what you have read.
- That said, if you simply cannot think of a better way of saying what your source says, it is better to give a direct quote than a too-close paraphrase. (For proper paraphrasing, see the handout on “How to recognize and avoid plagiarism”).
- Long quotations: sometimes these are necessary and useful. When you put in a long quotation (say, roughly over three lines of text) you should set it apart from the rest of the text by indenting it.
- Bracketed information within a quotation: avoid this when you can. Especially a quotation that has more than one bracketed aside probably doesn't deserve to be in your paper in the first place. However, sometimes brackets are handy and make the text flow better than providing the bracketed information outside the quote. For instance

AuthorX claims that “in the past five years, banana consumption [in Never-
Never-Land] has gone up by 400 percent, while apple consumption has steadily
declined.”

This sounds better than

AuthorX, writing about Never-Never-Land, claims that “in the past five years. . . .”

or

AuthorX claims that, in Never-Never-Land, “in the past five years. . .”

- In sum, there are no definite rules to quoting (beyond the obvious—if it is a quote, it has to be marked as a quote, word for word from your source, and cited properly). Rather, quoting is like everything about writing: think about why you are writing what you are writing; if there is a better way to express what you are saying, use that.

Resources for the Chicago citation style

The basic idea of a citation style is simply to set out the sources in a consistent and clear manner so that the reader can easily tell what kinds of sources you are using, whether a particular source is a book, an article, an archival source, etc., and (most importantly) to help the reader consult the sources you have used should they wish to do so. Hence, although you should follow the exact layout (punctuation, italics, formatting for authors) of the citation style you are being asked to use, the main thing is to be consistent, unambiguous, and thorough.

Often, citing primary sources presents some tricky problems, because there are so many varieties (archival, government reports/documents, various published and unpublished materials) and because different archives use different organizational principles. Here, especially, you need to keep in mind that the purpose of your citations is primarily to help your reader find the sources you have used; so, note down everything that is essential to locating the document. For an archival source, this could mean (apart from the obvious, like the name of the archive and the collection) citing series, box number, and folder number.

If you are confused as to how to cite a particular source, it's a good idea to take a standard history journal and look at the footnotes for guidance. *The Journal of American History*, for instance, uses the Chicago style. (Note, however, that you need to find the first time a source is cited to get the full citation rather than the abbreviated form used in subsequent footnotes.)

Below are a few resources for the Chicago citation style for the humanities, which is the style most widely used in history.

- Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. (UA Main Library, Reference section: LB2369 .T8 1996.)
- Chicago manual of style website:
http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
- UA library guide to the Chicago style:
<http://aquarius.library.arizona.edu/search/reference/citation-cms.html>
- Style guide with a sample paper (with a fairly simple range of sources):
http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/p04_c10_s1.html
- The trickier stuff, like archival sources or government documents:
<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/WritingGuides/advanced%20citation.htm>
- The Journal of American History stylesheet, including information on how to footnote unpublished primary sources:
<http://www.indiana.edu/~jah/stylesheet.shtml>