

2005 Research Paper Writing Tips Series:

CMS Research Paper Writing Tips

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The Office of Black Student Affairs
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This guide is based on the Chicago Manual of Style format referenced by Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference* (Fifth Edition); if your field or professor suggests another style, consult a writer's reference guide.

FONT & FONT SIZE

Times New Roman is the most generally used font. Make sure your font is no larger than 12-point.

INDENTING & NUMBERING

Indent the first line of each entry one-half inch (or five spaces) from the left margin; do not indent additional lines in an entry. Begin the note with the arabic numeral that corresponds to the number in the text. Put a period after the number.

INTRODUCTION / CONCLUSION

Make sure these are at least a page each. In your introduction you should state your thesis statement, what you are going to discuss in your paper, and why it is important. In your conclusion you should summarize your main points and arguments (restating your thesis statement), and briefly position your paper's potential applications in a larger context.

MARGINS & LINE SPACING

Leave margins of at least one inch at the top, bottom, and sides of the page. Double-space the entire manuscript, including long quotations that have been set off from the text.

PAGINATION

Using arabic numerals, number all pages except the title page in the upper right corner. Depending on your instructor's preference, you may also use a short title or your last name before the page numbers to help identify pages in case they come loose from your manuscript.

TITLE PAGE

Include a title page that lists the title of your paper without quotation marks, bold, italicized, or underlined type. Make sure your title is centered on the page. Put your name, the course title & number, semester, year, and professor title toward the bottom section of your paper. Do not type a page number on the title page but count it in the manuscript numbering; that is, the first page of the text will usually be numbered 2.

VISUALS

The Chicago Manual of Style classifies visuals as tables and illustrations (figures that include drawings, photographs, maps, and charts). Keep visuals as simple as possible. Label each table with an arabic numeral (Table 1, Table 2, and so on) and provide a clear title that identifies the subject. The label and title should appear on separate lines above the table, flush left. Below the table, give its source in a note like this one:

Source: Edna Bonacich and Richard P. Appelbaum, Behind the Label (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 145.

CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE REFERENCING EXAMPLES

Chicago manuscript guidelines are fairly generic, since they were not created with a specific type of writing in mind, so alphabetize the bibliography by the last names of the authors (or editors); when a work has no author or editor, alphabetize by the first word of the title other than *A*, *An*, or *The*. If your list includes two or more works by the same author, use three hyphens instead of the author's name in all entries after the first. You may arrange the entries alphabetically by title or chronologically; be consistent throughout the bibliography. Lastly, the *Chicago Manual of Style* no longer requires the use of "*ibid.*" to refer to the work cited in the previous note. The Latin abbreviations "*op. cit.*" and "*loc. cit.*" are also no longer used.

BASIC TEXT FORMAT & TEXT BY THE SAME AUTHOR FOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC ENTRIES

Thompson, Robert Farris. *Flash of the Spirit: Afro-American Art & Philosophy*. New York: Vintage Books, 1984.

BASIC TEXT FORMAT FOR MORE THAN ONE WORK BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Marable, Manning. *Dispatches from the Ebony Tower: Intellectuals Confront the African American Experience*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

---. *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy, and Society*. Boston: South End Press, 1983.

FOOTNOTE OR ENDNOTE

1. Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: Afro-American Art & Philosophy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 196.

EDITED TEXT WITH AUTHOR

Hall, Stuart. *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. Edited by David G. Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen. New York: Routledge, 1996.

WEBSITE DOCUMENT

Little, William. *Africana Studies at the Crossroads*. 5 June 2001, <<http://www.africana.com/articles/02jun/crossroads.htm>> (17 Aug. 2001).

JOURNAL

Kelley, Robin. "African Diaspora Revisited." *African Studies Review* 14.5 (2001): 26-85.

ARTICLE IN MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Smith, Bomani D. "An Evening with Aaron McGruder." *Essence*, February 2002, 50-53.

IN-TEXT CITATION EXAMPLES

LONG QUOTES

Quotations that are longer than four typed lines or three lines of verse are considered long quotes. When writing a long quote indent the whole quotation one-half inch (or 5 spaces) from the left. Make sure to double space the quotation. No quotation marks necessary. For example:

According to Dickerson,

Dr. Cheikh Anta Diop is considered to be the most respected scholar on Kemet. An Egyptologist and linguist, he had the revolutionary idea to use the scientific method to disprove the many myths surrounding ancient Kemet. He developed a way to test the levels of melanin in Egyptian mummies, which revealed that the ancient Egyptians were, indeed, Africans. He also argued that the Egyptian language was related to African

dialects and can be connected to the Wolof language of today. By far, the most important theory that he sought to prove was that human life began in Africa.¹

(Double-space after quote)

SHORT QUOTES

Use quotation marks for the quote, site the author in the introductory sentence, and footnote (or endnote) the reference information at the bottom of the page.

According to Clarke, “the Black Studies Movement was a project designed to overthrow the curriculum of white supremacy, which in turn led to the African Centered project.”¹

FOOTNOTES / ENDNOTES

Use footnotes to include supplementary information that may interfere with the flow of your paper or when you want to refer your readers to alternative sources. Use a consecutive numbering system (unless there is ample reason for an alternative approach). Most Microsoft Word programs have this feature in the “Insert” menu under “Footnote.” Choose either the ‘footnote’ or the ‘endnote’ command based on personal preference or your instructor’s wishes (this can be a great source of annoyance for those grading your work - so find out if they have a preference).

Begin the endnotes on a new page at the end of the paper. Center the title Notes about one inch from the top of the page, and number the pages consecutively with the rest of the manuscript.

TIPS

- 1) **Never** mix footnote and endnote styles. Use either one or the other.
- 2) Don’t edit your paper while you write. Editing too early can stifle your creativity. Edit after you have written your paper, proofread after you have edited (read aloud after you’ve typed it and you **WILL** find more errors).
- 3) Limit your Internet sources for your research paper to about 2 or 3 references and keep the bulk of your research textual. Internet sources are usually a bit difficult to verify (especially after they have been pulled down from their URL address) and are still considered less reputable than text references.
- 4) Write your introductions and conclusions after the body of your paper is written, this will allow you to keep up with the changes you’ll make while you are writing your paper.
- 5) Start your assignment as early as possible so that you can break your paper into small parts rather than writing it all at once.
- 6) Try not to write the way you speak. Commas, periods, colons, and semi-colons are not used the same way in common speech. Also, research word definitions rather than assume their accuracy based on how they sound. In other words, don’t use words because they sound “intelligent” (**most professors hate this**); just make sure your argument is clear.
- 7) Remember, your writing will improve the more you read, so read constantly. **READING IMPROVES WRITING!!!**
- 8) Always proofread your paper. Print out your paper and read it aloud **s-l-o-w-l-y**. This will help you catch grammar and spelling errors because spell-check doesn’t catch everything! (I know I said this in #2 but I can’t stress this enough).
- 9) Refrain from making absolute statements. Allow for the possibility of other ideas and approaches, whether you are aware of them or not.
- 10) Do not write to fill space, make sure quotes are explained after using them; and make sure they support your argument!
- 11) It doesn’t hurt to give yourself a few days to think about your paper after you’ve written it. Don’t plan to finish your paper the day it’s due, give yourself time to leave it and revisit it later. Remember, revise it, give it to someone else to proofread, then revise it again.
- 12) Spell-check does not pick up certain words, here are a few: **too, to, their, they’re, there, four, for, one, and on**. So make sure you are using the proper word for what you are trying to write.
- 13) Use commas sparingly, especially with coordinating conjunctions like **and, but, or, nor, for, so, and yet**.