Why Use the Chicago Manual of Style:
An Argument for Detail

Most CMOS papers require a title page:
Put your title a third of the way down the page.
Include your name, the class, and the date.

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With so many styles of citation, why would someone use a more complicated system like the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS)? If MLA is the minimalist bare bones of citation, then CMOS is the flesh, blood, and eyelashes. Though it may seem cumbersome to a newcomer, the notes allow for an author to be meticulous in directing the audience to exactly where and how they found their information. In addition, the thoroughness allowed for in the notes can greatly enhance the content of a paper through commentary. Overall, the detail required of CMOS enables authors to better guide their readers through both their research and their analysis.

By including a specific citation every time a source is used, CMOS allows writers not only to avoid plagiarism, but also to acknowledge the importance of the sources used. Good scholarship requires researchers to turn to a variety of sources and “properly using the NB (note and bibliography) system builds credibility by demonstrating accountability to source material.”

Showing all of your sources shows off all the work you did researching your subject.

When it comes to the content of a paper, CMOS is also helpful. The ability to add commentary and expand on sources in the notes gives the writer options for how to present their research. By adding comments, a writer can expand on sources and ideas in more detail without interrupting the flow of the main content. This is useful in history, religion, and other papers where more background on a source is useful to a reader but such background is not immediately necessary for the argument in the main text. Also, by being able to comment on the processes used while researching the source, the author gains credibility for their thoroughness.

Footnotes at the bottom of the page in the order they appear.


Commentary separated by citation with a period.
When doing endnotes instead of footnotes, notes go on a separate page before the bibliography. "Notes" is centered at the top of the page.


Citations ordered alphabetically
Hanging indentation
Single-spaced with a space between each citation

*Sample paper retrieved from The Chicago Manual of Style Online