

We learned in the previous lesson that the essential elements of a citation are not always the same for each type of material you use AND that you can find out what these elements are by consulting a style guide.

Your instructor may assign a specific style for you to follow. Here are just a few of the most common ones. Make sure you use the style consistently throughout - in the layout of the paper (for example, the margins, line spacing, and format of the cover page), in the footnotes or in-text citations and in your final list of references. If you're not assigned a specific style to use then you are free to choose whatever style you would like - again as long as you're consistent.

Note: many programs and disciplines have a preferred style. If you aren't sure which style to choose it's probably best to use the style most preferred by your program or discipline.

If you've never used a style guide before it can be confusing to navigate. The index may be the easiest way to get to the page you need to consult – but first you need to analyze your source and determine which citation elements you'll need to record.

The two main concepts to consider are authorship and the type of source you used. Here are some useful questions to ask yourself.

Let's start now with authorship:

- Does the source have an author? Multiple authors? Is the author unknown, anonymous or pseudonymous? You'll find the rules for formatting all these options in the index under "Authors" "Authorship" or similar term.

Here's an example of how a style guide index might direct you to the rules for handling anonymous authors.

And here's what the specific instructions might look like. After reading the overview in section 5.1 you can scan down to see what the rule looks like in practice.

Next, look at the material type of your source. Finding the rules for citing different types of sources works the same way as finding out how to cite different types of authors - consult the index.

- Are you quoting an audio clip? A journal article? A blog entry, sacred text, section of a website or something else?
- Different format types have different elements that must be recorded – so look the format up in the index to see all the pieces of information you need to include in the citation.

Finally, make sure that you consult the rules for formatting your citation both in the body of your paper and in the list of your references.

- Sometimes the formatting rules are substantially different. Look at how Chicago style handles the formatting of footnotes and endnotes versus the way the same information is laid out in the bibliography.

For more information about how to cite and using style guides check out the Library's how to cite guide. If you need any further help with choosing, locating or using a style manual you can contact a librarian by clicking the Ask an Expert link on the Library homepage.