
The Basic Components of Complete Bibliographical References

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🕒 July 18, 2016 📁 Researchers and Scientists - How to get a Journal Article Published 👤 Rene Tetzner

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The author guidelines provided by a scholarly journal or publisher will generally include some instructions on the referencing style and format required or preferred in manuscripts submitted for publication. If examples of full bibliographical references are included in those instructions, they will usually show which bits of information are needed when compiling a complete list of the sources you have cited in your document. It is surprising, however, how rarely the basic components necessary for full references are mentioned or explained and how frequently essential elements of complete references are omitted in bibliographical lists. Therefore, although the documentation required differs depending on the types of publications listed, and certain sources will present anomalies and challenges, the following summary of basic components may prove helpful when recording the necessary information for the most common types of sources.

- The name of the author(s) or editor(s) of a publication should always be provided, but the name of an organisation or corporation can be substituted if

appropriate. When no author name is given in a publication, 'Anon.' (for 'anonymous') can be used. If a publication is a translation, the translator's name should be included as well. An editor's name is usually indicated by the abbreviation 'ed.' (plural 'eds.') while a translator's name is marked by 'tr.' or 'trans.' The arrangement and format of names tend to vary among referencing styles, so the guidelines should be consulted.

- The title of a publication should always be provided, with book and thesis titles often italicised and article and presentation titles frequently enclosed in quotation marks. Capitalisation generally marks titles, but it differs from style to style, so do be sure to check the guidelines.
- Edition and volume numbers should be included if relevant, with the abbreviation 'edn' often accompanying edition numbers and the abbreviation 'vol.' commonly appearing with volume numbers. There is never a need to indicate the first edition of a book, and only the volume or volumes you actually use should be listed.
- If the publication is contained within another publication, such as an article in a journal, a chapter in a book or a presentation in a collection of conference proceedings, the title of the journal, book or conference volume should also be provided. If the containing publication has a specific editor, that name should be included as well. Volume and issue numbers should be provided for journals, and, if relevant, edition or volume numbers should be included for books. Numbers for the pages on which the article or chapter appears should always be provided, with the abbreviation 'pp.' often used (pp.1–56) when listing books, but not when listing journals. When the source is an online version of an article, a DOI or URL can be recorded instead of page numbers
- The year of publication is always required, unless there is no date indicated, in which case the abbreviation 'n.d.' (for 'no date') should be used instead. For a source such as a multivolume work published over more than one year, a date range should be provided (for example, '1995–2001'), and for newspaper articles and journal articles published online prior to print publication, full dates including day, month and year are the norm. The dates recorded for web sites can vary – date of first publication, date of most recent update or date of your most recent access to the site – and more than one of these dates may be provided.
- Both the name of the publisher and the city in which the source was published are usually required, although some referencing styles use only one or the other, so the guidelines should be consulted. The place of publication is often followed by a country, state or province abbreviation, especially if the city intended might be uncertain without this information (Cambridge, for instance, is a city in both England and Massachusetts).

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