How to Write Footnotes

Information on how to write footnotes and endnotes. Footnotes, a type of citation format, are most often used for history and philosophy papers. As such, scientists rarely encounter it, but it is still useful to know how to follow the practice.

Many biology journals, for example, prefer footnotes because they allow annotation of the in-text citation on the same page.

Whilst footnotes are a little more cumbersome than the 'author/date' system, they are useful where sources require elaboration and short explanatory notes.

What is a Footnote

The footnote takes the form of a superscripted number, just after a paraphrased piece of information. Subsequently, a cross-reference to this number is inserted at the bottom of the **same** page.

In fact, for dissertations and theses, many writers use footnotes to keep track of their citations [1], adding a short note of what exactly each one adds to the paper.

Once the paper is complete, the writer converts them to endnotes at the end or every chapter, or even removes them all together, and uses a standard <u>APA</u> [2] or <u>MLA</u> [3] bibliography instead.

Automatically Inserting Footnotes

The reason that footnotes are still popular in some fields is that most word processing programs now include a function that makes it very easy to include footnotes in any paper.

In Microsoft Word, clicking **Insert > Reference > Footnote** allows you to insert footnotes automatically, and automatically numbers them. This function is so useful, that even if you cut and paste, and swap information around, it automatically adjusts the footnotes.

This is why it is an excellent resource for keeping track of your sources during the course of a <u>research paper</u> [4].

How to Write Footnotes - Protocols

If you are using footnotes, the common convention is to insert a full citation, including author, year and the title of the book, followed by the page number. Afterwards, the surname of the author and the page number is sufficient.

Older journals often use the word ibid, to show that a footnote uses the same source as the previous one, but this has become much rarer.

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[1] https://explorable.com/in-text-citation
[2] https://explorable.com/apa-citations
[3] https://explorable.com/mla-citations
[4] https://explorable.com/writing-a-research-paper