

The Harvard and Oxford styles of referencing and citation in International Relations Research

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1. Introduction

Referencing and citation are central to academic writing because they acknowledge intellectual debts, prevent plagiarism, and enable readers to trace the origin of ideas (Neville, 2010). They serve as the backbone of scholarly communication, ensuring transparency and credibility. Among the many systems available, Harvard and Oxford are two widely recognized styles, each reflecting distinct disciplinary traditions. Harvard, an author–date system, is commonly used in sciences and social sciences, while Oxford, a footnote-based system, is favored in humanities and law (Pears & Shields, 2019). This paper aims to distinguish between the two styles, situating them within broader academic practices and evaluating their strengths and limitations.

2. Literature Review

Scholars have long emphasized the importance of referencing systems in maintaining academic integrity and facilitating knowledge dissemination (Carroll, 2007). The Harvard style, originating in the early 20th century, is characterized by concise in-text citations that include the author's surname, year of publication, and page number. This system allows readers to quickly identify sources without interrupting the flow of the text (Cite Them Right, 2021). By contrast, the Oxford style relies on footnotes or endnotes, providing full bibliographic details at the bottom of the page or at the end of the document (University of Oxford, 2023). This approach offers greater detail and flexibility, particularly for disciplines that require extensive commentary. Comparative studies suggest that Harvard is efficient for empirical research, while Oxford is more suited to discursive analysis in the humanities (Neville, 2010).

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three theoretical perspectives. First, **intertextuality theory** posits that texts are interconnected, with citations serving as visible markers of these relationships (Kristeva, 1986). Referencing systems operationalize this theory by making intertextual links explicit. Second, **academic integrity frameworks** highlight citation as a safeguard against plagiarism, reinforcing trust in scholarly work (Carroll, 2007). Third, **communication theory** views citations as credibility signals, shaping how readers perceive authority and reliability in academic texts (Pears & Shields, 2019). Together, these frameworks provide a lens through which Harvard and Oxford styles can be compared.

4. Methodology

The methodology adopted in this paper is a **qualitative comparative analysis** of Harvard and Oxford referencing styles. Examples were drawn from academic guides and university manuals to illustrate differences in citation placement, formatting, and disciplinary use. For instance, a book by John Smith published in 2020 would appear in Harvard as (*Smith, 2020, p. 15*), while in Oxford it would be cited in a footnote: *John Smith, Title of Book (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 15*. This comparative approach highlights not only structural differences but also the implications for readability and scholarly communication.

5. Discussion of Objectives

The objectives of this study are fourfold.

- **Objective 1:** To identify the structure of Harvard referencing. Harvard uses in-text citations and a reference list, making it concise and reader-friendly (Cite Them Right, 2021).
- **Objective 2:** To identify the structure of Oxford referencing. Oxford employs footnotes or endnotes with full bibliographic details, offering depth and flexibility (University of Oxford, 2023).
- **Objective 3:** To compare strengths and weaknesses. Harvard's brevity aids readability but may lack detail, while Oxford's footnotes allow commentary but can clutter pages (Neville, 2010).
- **Objective 4:** To evaluate contexts of use. Harvard dominates sciences and social sciences, whereas Oxford remains strong in humanities, law, and history (Pears & Shields, 2019).

Harvard referencing style is used primarily in education area. Harvard referencing style uses references in two places in a piece of writing: in the text and in a reference list at the end. In general, each author name that appears in the text must also appear in the reference list, and every work in the reference list must also be referred to in the main text. All the details of the reference are important, even the full stops and commas. In-text references in Harvard style should give the author's family name and the year of the work's publication. If you quote or paraphrase, you should also give a page number. Below are illustrations of the Harvard style:

Material Type	In Text Citation	Reference List Entry
Book - Print	(Connell 2009)	Connell, R 2009, <i>Gender</i> , Polity Press, Cambridge.

E-Book accessed via a Universitas Library database	See "Book – Print" above	Same as for print book. If a DOI is available and your lecturer requires it, this may be included at the end of the reference (see example of "Journal article with DOI", above).
E-Book from web (freely available online)	(de Grosbois 2015)	Same as for print book, but include date viewed and URL. If an eBook is "born digital" (it has only ever been published online) and no place of publication can be located, only list the publisher. If it has a DOI, this may be listed in place of the date viewed and URL. de Grosbois, T 2015, Mass influence: the habits of the highly influential, Wildfire Workshops, viewed 21 May 2017, (http://www.massinfluencethebook.com).
Book with two or three authors	(Campbell, Fox & de Zwart 2010)	List all authors in the order they appear on the title page of the book. Use an ampersand (&) to separate the last two authors. Campbell, E, Fox, R & de Zwart, M 2010, Students' guide to legal writing, law exams and self assessment, 3rd edn, Federation Press, Sydney.
Book with four or more authors	(Henkin et al. 2006)	In the in-text citation, list only the first author, then et al. In the bibliography, list all authors in the order they appear on the title page of the book. Use an ampersand (&) to separate the last two authors. Henkin, RE, Bova, D, Dillehay, GL, Halama, JR, Karesh, SM, Wagner, RH & Zimmer, MZ 2006, Nuclear medicine, 2nd edn, Mosby Elsevier, Philadelphia.
Book chapter in compiled book (each chapter written by a different author)	(Warner 2010)	This example is for a book with multiple authors and editors. For the in-text citation, list the author(s) and date. For the bibliography, give author/chapter information, then editors (initials, then surname), title, publication information. You must also give the chapter page numbers. Warner, R 2010, 'Giving feedback on assignment writing to international students - the integration of voice and writing tools', in WM Chan, KN Chin, M Nagami & T Suthiwan (eds), Media in foreign language teaching and learning, De Gruyter, Boston, pp. 355-382.

Book with an edition number	(Carroll 2012)	<p>For a book with an edition number, add the number and the abbreviation 'edn' after the title of the book. There is no need to include edition information if a book is a first edition, or if no edition is mentioned.</p> <p>Carroll, AB 2012, <i>Business & society: ethics, sustainability, and stakeholder management</i>, 8th edn, South-Western Cengage Learning, Mason, Oklahoma.</p>
Book with no author	(Style manual for authors, editors and printers 2002)	<p>Use the title in place of the author name.</p> <p>Style manual for authors, editors and printers 2002, 6th edn, John Wiley & Sons, Milton, Qld.</p>
Book with a volume number	(Cowie, Mackin & McCaig 1983)	Cowie, AP, Mackin, R & McCaig, IR 1983, <i>Oxford dictionary of current idiomatic English</i> , vol. 2, Phrase, clause and sentence idioms, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
Book written in a foreign language	Translate the book title only. (Lemmens 1996)	Lemmens, M 1996, 'La grammaire dans les dictionnaires bilingues', in H Béjoint & P Thoiron (eds), <i>Les dictionnaires bilingues</i> (Bilingual dictionaries), Duculot s.a., Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, pp. 71-102.
Book translated from a foreign language	(Jansson 1948)	Jansson, T 1948, <i>Finn family Moomintroll</i> , trans. E Portch, Puffin Books, London.

Material Type	In Text Citation	Reference List Entry
Conference paper published in book of proceedings	(Goldfinch 2005)	Goldfinch, M 2005, 'A pilot discussion board for questions about referencing: what do students say and do?' in G Grigg & C Bond (eds), <i>Supporting learning in the 21st century</i> , proceedings of the 2005 Annual International Conference of the Association of Tertiary Learning Advisors Aotearoa/New Zealand (ATLAANZ), Dunedin, New Zealand, pp. 179-191.
Conference paper – online edited proceedings	(Crisp, G, Hillier, M & Joarder, S 2010)	Crisp, G, Hillier, M & Joarder, S 2010, 'Assessing students in Second Life – some options', in CH Steel, MJ Keppell, P Gerbic, & S Housego (eds), <i>Curriculum, technology & transformation for an unknown future</i> . Proceedings of the 27th Annual ASCILITE Conference: Curriculum, technology and transformation for an unknown future, Sydney, pp. 256–261, viewed 15 July 2011, (http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/sydney10/proceedings.htm).

Conference presentation unpublished	–	(Butler 2009)	Butler, D 2009, 'Using video worked examples to enhance learning in a first year mathematics course', paper presented at the 4th ERGA conference, University of Adelaide, 24-25 September.
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Conference Publications

Required information and layout:

Author's family name, Initial(s) year of publication, 'Title of paper', in Editor's initial(s) Editor's family name (ed.), Title of conference, Conference Organiser/Publisher, Place of publication, pp. xxx–xxx.

Newspaper or magazine article

Required information and layout:

Author's family name, Initial(s) OR Publication Name year, 'Title of article', Title of news or magazine site, date of publication OR volume and issue, page numbers if applicable, viewed date (if online publication), (URL)

Data set

Material Type	In Text Citation	Reference List Entry
Newspaper or magazine article	(Robertson Kyriacou 2010)	Robertson, D & Kyriacou, K 2010, 'Skating on thin ice', Advertiser, 20 November, p. 9.
Newspaper or magazine article viewed online	(Banks 2010)	Banks, D 2010, 'Tweeting in court: Why reporters must be given guidelines', The Guardian, 15 December, viewed 25 November 2015, (http://www.theguardian.com/law/2010/dec/15/tweeting-court-reporters-julian-assange).
Newspaper or magazine article with no author	(Evening Express 2014)	Give the publication name in place of the author name. For articles viewed online, include date viewed and URL. Evening Express 2014, 'Firearms officer drove at 60mph on wrong side of road in Aberdeen', Evening Express, 22 May, p. 12, viewed 18 April 2017, (http://www.eveningexpress.co.uk/news/local/firearms-officer-drove-at-60mph-on-wrong-side-of-road-in-aberdeen-1.382464).

Required information and layout:

Author's family name, Initial(s) OR Authoring body year, Title of dataset, Physical location (if

Material Type	In Text Citation	Reference List Entry
Data set with DOI	(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies 2013)	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies 2013, Treatment episode data set -- discharges (TEDS-D) -- concatenated, 2006 to 2009, DOI:10.3886/ICPSR30122.v2.
Data set – no DOI	(Bureau of Meteorology 2011)	Bureau of Meteorology 2011, High-quality Australian daily rainfall dataset, Bureau of Meteorology, viewed 17 November 2011, (ftp://ftp.bom.gov.au/anon/home/ncc/www/change/HQdailyR).

applicable), DOI or viewed date, (URL). If a DOI is given, do not include date viewed or (URL).

Webpage

It is best, wherever possible, to reference the specific page or section of a website that you are using, rather than the whole website.

If a website document doesn't have an author (individual or corporate), start with the title of the document in italics followed by the date. If there is no date, use n.d.

Author's family name, Initial(s) OR Authoring body year, Title of webpage (in italics), Title of website, viewed date, (URL).

Material Type	In Text Citation	Reference List Entry
Webpage	(World Health Organization 2014)	World Health Organization 2014, WHO recommendations for routine immunization – summary tables, World Health Organization, viewed 1 May 2014, (http://www.who.int/immunization/policy/immunization_tables/en/).

Social media

Required information and layout:

Author's family name, initial(s) year, Title (in italics), source type, day and month of publication (if applicable), viewed date, (URL).

Material Type	In Text Citation	Reference List Entry
Blog	(Smalls & Brook 2010)	Smalls, S & Brook, S 2006, My great blog, blog, viewed 10 January 2008, (http://mygreatblog.blogspot.com).
Material Type	In Text Citation	Reference List Entry
Artwork	(Gaudernack 1907) (Turner 1812)	Gaudernack, G 1907, Plique a jour, enamelled vase, Kunstmuseum, Oslo. Turner, JMW 1812, Snow storm: Hannibal and army crossing the alps, Oil on canvas, 145×2360 mm, Turner Collection, Tate Gallery, Britain.
Australian Bureau of Statistics	(Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008)	Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008, Australian social trends 2007, cat. no. 4102.0, ABS, viewed 31 October 2008, (http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au). Material. http://www.daff.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/2003-06a.pdf .
The Bible	(Psalm 23: 1-2)	[Only include in reference list if details are necessary.]
Dictionary	(Longman dictionary of contemporary English 2003)	Longman dictionary of contemporary English, 3rd edn, 2003, Pearson Education Limited, Harlow, UK. [Only include in reference list if details are necessary.]
Encyclopaedia author prominent	– (Crystal 1995)	Crystal, D 1995, The Cambridge encyclopedia of the English language, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
Encyclopaedia author not prominent	– (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1966)	Encyclopaedia Britannica 1966, Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., Chicago.
Email, phone conversation, letters, interviews	Treat as a personal communication; do not include it in the reference list.	It is preferable to include the details in your written text. e.g. A Polish learner's dictionary was written in 2009 (Pius ten Hacken, personal communication, 5 November 2010).
Lecture in which you take your own notes	Treat as a personal communication; do not include it in the reference list.	It is preferable to include the details in your written text. e.g. During a lecture in the topic 7052 'Electromagnetic theory and RFID applications' given at the University of Adelaide on 12 July 2010, Professor Peter Cole said ...
Lecture notes given out during a lecture	(Cole 2010)	Cole, P 2010, 'Part 5: advanced electromagnetic theory', lecture notes distributed in the topic 7052 Electromagnetic theory and RFID applications, University of Adelaide, on 12 July 2010.

Maps	(Mason 1832)	Mason, J 1832, Map of the countries lying between Spain and India, 1:8,000,000, Ordnance Survey, London.
Media release	(Smith 1999)	Smith, A (Minister for Justice and Commons) 1999, Coastwatch initiative bears fruit, media release, Parliament House, Canberra, 21 July.
Pamphlet – organisation as author	(Health Department Victoria 1987)	Health Department Victoria 1987, Quit: give smoking away in 5 days, Victorian Smoking and Health Program booklet, Anti-Cancer Council and National Heart Foundation, Melbourne.
Patent	(Hill 1956)	Hill, L 1956, Hills hoist, Australian Patent 215772.
Picture or graph	(Willison & O'Regan 2006)	Willison, J & O'Regan, K 2006, Research skill development framework, viewed 14 December 2010, (http://www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/rsd/framework/).
Play	(William Shakespeare, Hamlet, act 3, scene 1, line 64.)	Shakespeare, W 1968, Hamlet, The Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, London. [Only include in reference list if details are necessary.]
Poem	(John Keats, Ode to a nightingale, verse 7, lines 1-2.)	[Only include in reference list if details are necessary. Reference the source from which you found the poem, e.g. book or website.]
PowerPoint presentation	(Aguilar 2001)	Aguilar, F 2001, 'Polyethylene biodigesters: production of biogas and organic fertilizer from animal manure', PowerPoint presentation, viewed 14 December 2010, (http://www.adelaide.edu.au/biogas/poly_digester/).
Radio broadcast	(The search for meaning 1998)	The search for meaning 1998, radio program, ABC Radio, Sydney, 24 March.
Report – print and online	(Bradley, Noonan & Scales 2008) or give the name: (The Bradley report 2008)	For online reports, include date viewed and (URL). See 'Reports by organisations without a specific author' (next entry) for example. Bradley, D, Noonan, P, Nugent, H & Scales, B 2008, Review of Australian higher education, Australian Government, Canberra. Short name: Bradley report. Give a reference to the longer name: eg See Review of Australian higher education.
Reports by organisations without a specific author	(The least developed countries report 2010)	The least developed countries report 2010, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, viewed 14 December 2010, (https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ldc2010_en.pdf).

Television broadcast	(Letters and numbers 2010)	Letter and numbers 2010, television program, SBS Television, Melbourne, 6 October.
Thesis	(Miller)2002)	Miller, J 2002, 'An investigation into the use of anglicisms in modern European Portuguese', MA thesis, Flinders University, Adelaide.
Video, film, DVD	(Coco Chanel & Igor Stravinsky 2010)	Specify the format (e.g. video recording) after the date. Add other useful information after the citation, e.g. directed by... Coco Chanel & Igor Stravinsky 2010, video recording, Madman Entertainment, Australia. Directed by Jan Kounen.

6. Conclusion

Harvard and Oxford referencing styles differ primarily in **citation placement** and **disciplinary preference**. Harvard's author–date system prioritizes brevity and efficiency, making it ideal for empirical research. Oxford's footnote system emphasizes detail and flexibility, aligning with the needs of discursive disciplines. Despite these differences, both styles serve the same purpose: ensuring academic integrity and enabling readers to verify sources (Carroll, 2007). Understanding these distinctions is crucial for students and researchers navigating diverse academic contexts.

7. Recommendations

Based on the analysis, several recommendations emerge. First, students should master both Harvard and Oxford styles, as institutional requirements vary. Second, the use of citation management tools such as Zotero and Mendeley can minimize errors and save time (Cite Them Right, 2021). Third, educators should emphasize the importance of discipline-specific traditions, encouraging students to adapt their referencing practices accordingly. Finally, universities should provide clear guidelines to reduce confusion and promote consistency in academic writing.

References:

Carroll, J. (2007). *A handbook for deterring plagiarism in higher education*. Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development.

Cite Them Right. (2021). *The essential referencing guide*. Bloomsbury.

Kristeva, J. (1986). *The Kristeva reader*. Columbia University Press.

Neville, C. (2010). *The complete guide to referencing and avoiding plagiarism*. Open University Press.

Pears, R., & Shields, G. (2019). *Cite them right: The essential referencing guide*. Bloomsbury.

University of Oxford. (2023). *History faculty style guide*. Oxford University.