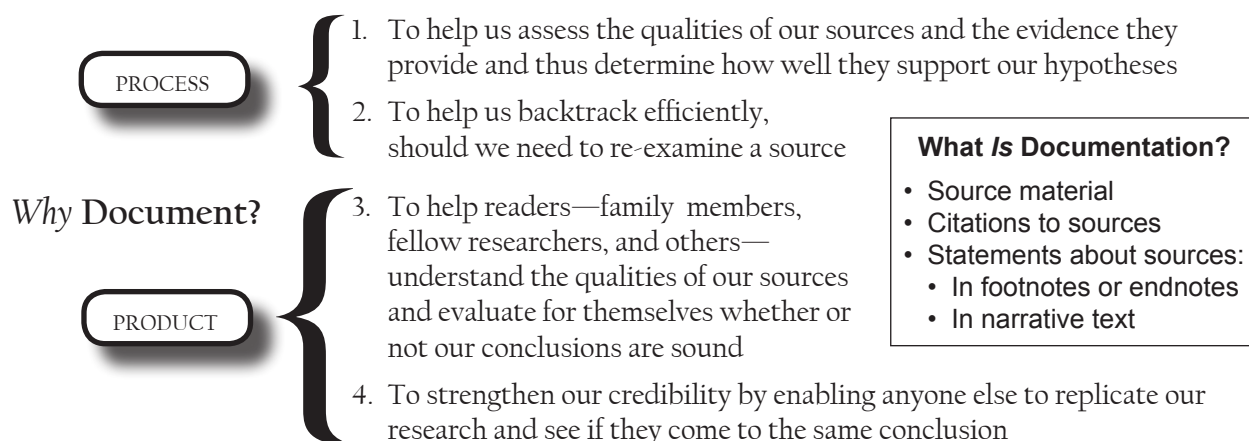


# Documentation: The What, Why, Where, and How

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The why, what, when, where, and how of documenting genealogies. Learn five characteristics making a citation complete and accurate and a simplified format for citing most sources.



## Documentation: Communication between Researcher and Reader

- ✓ Some documentation principles are not intuitive and might seem not to “make sense.” Nevertheless—when used consistently—the patterns serve the purposes listed above.
- ✓ When used consistently, documentation conventions enable us to communicate in as little space as possible the important information about the sources we used. (If everyone cited sources differently, few of our readers would understand what sources we used or their qualities, preventing us from achieving documentation purposes 3 and 4.)

“Citation is an art, not a science. As budding artists, we learn the principles—from color and form to shape and texture. Once we have mastered the basics, we are free to improvise. Through that improvisation, we capture the uniqueness of each subject or setting. . . . Therefore, once we have learned the principles of citation, we have both an artistic license and a researcher’s responsibility to adapt those principles to fit materials that do not match any standard model.”

From Elizabeth Shown Mills, “Fundamentals of Citation,” in *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 2009), 41.

## What to Document

1. All facts not general knowledge, for example:
  - Personal data, like relationships, military service, and land holdings
  - Historical and local data, like a battle, courthouse fire, or petition
2. Information leading to or supporting conclusions, including evidence from negative searches
3. All other negative searches, but only for research in progress

## What Not to Document

4. Common knowledge
5. Information found in many encyclopedias
6. Information readers will remember you have already documented
7. Information in obvious introductions and recapitulations

## When to Document

8. When we want our conclusions to be credible
9. When we want descendants or other researchers to build on our work, rather than having to redo it

## Where to Document

### **Punctuation in Citations**

- **REFERENCE-NOTE**(footnote and endnote) citations are punctuated sentence style.
- **SOURCE-LIST** (reference list, bibliography) citations are punctuated paragraph style.

10. Reference notes containing one or more citations to one or more sources; may include discussion of the source (making the note a discursive note)
  - Footnotes—preferred by most genealogists
  - Endnotes—sometimes used in books for general readers; best placed at the book’s end, not each chapter’s end
11. Source lists (aka reference lists, bibliographies, etc.)—used by genealogists mostly in books, class and lecture handouts, and sometimes in reports; may be annotated

## In-text Note Numbers

12. Superscripted numbers in text sequentially starting with number 1 for the note nearest the beginning of the article, book, chapter, or report, each corresponding to one footnote or endnote
13. Set in regular type (never italicized)
14. Never more than one number in the same place (footnotes may, however, contain more than one citation)
15. Follow—never precede—the information the note documents and all punctuation
16. Usually appear at the ends of sentences and bullet points

### **STANDARD 6** (under “Standards for Documenting”).

“**Format.** Genealogists use humanities-style citations (notes plus bibliography), a style designed for heavy users of manuscript materials. They follow two guides modeling humanities-style principles and formats: *Evidence Explained* covers citations for a full array of materials used by genealogists. *The Chicago Manual of Style* discusses capitalization, foreign languages, punctuation, and other documentation-related issues.”

From Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards Manual* (Nashville, Tenn.: Ancestry, 2014), 8.

## Essential Citation Components

### **Many Citations and Notes Show—**

- Whether the information they document is primary or secondary
- Whether the source is an original or is a derivative of an original source

Such citations eliminate the need to discuss these assessments of error-vulnerability in our narratives.

"Genealogical source citations fulfill several critical purposes, but their most important use is to support genealogical proof statements, summaries, and arguments. Citations show that research scope was 'reasonably exhaustive.' . . . Citations' components and formats . . . show that our conclusions rest on the least error-prone sources."

Thomas W. Jones, *Mastering Genealogical Proof* (Arlington, Va.: National Genealogical Society, 2003), 33.

### **Full and Short Citations**

- Only a work's first reference to a source cites it in full.
- Subsequent citations to the source omit authors' first names, source locations, and other details.

"We collect and include in our compilation a complete, accurate citation to the source or sources of each item of information we use."

Second component of the Genealogical Proof Standard. See Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards* (Nashville, Tenn.: Ancestry, 2014), 1.

*Who?* —one of the following:

- ✓ Author or authors
- ✓ Creator (typically a county, town, or other government, or a religious entity; occasionally a specific governmental agency)
- ✓ Informant (usual for citations to interviews, depositions, etc.)

*What?* —one of the following:

- ✓ Title that appears on the source, capitalized headline style
  - Italicized if the source is a publication
  - If published, may be preceded by the title of a part of the source (article, chapter, section, web page, etc.), in quotation marks, not italicized, and with headline-style capitalization
  - Descriptive words may follow the title (database, digital image, online family tree, edition, editors, number of volumes, PDF, etc.), not italicized, not in quotation marks, and capitalized *sentence* style
- ✓ Brief description of the source, if it bears no title
  - Neither italicized nor in quotation marks
  - Capitalized *sentence* style

*When?* —one of the following:

- ✓ If the source is published, this is its year of publication or copyright—add exact date for newspapers, month or season for other periodicals, and access date for websites.
- ✓ If the source is unpublished, this is the date it was created or the date of the event it reports.

*Where?* —the item of interest's location *within* the source

- ✓ If the source is published and paginated, this is the page number.
- ✓ If the source is unpublished, this is a list, layer by layer (through record groups, series, collections, etc.), from the item of interest to the repository (often starts with the item and ends with the repository, but order may vary when the item's location is clear).

*Where?* —location *of* the source

- ✓ If the source is a book or CD-ROM, this is the publisher's city, state, and name—like they appear in the publication.
- ✓ If the source is a newspaper, this is its city and state.
- ✓ If the source is a website, this is its URL.
- ✓ If the source is a periodical, location information is omitted.
- ✓ If the source is unpublished, this is the name of building or office where the source is located and its city and state.

### Citations Vary With Context

- Crafting a citation depends on thoroughly understanding the source, which may include its original purpose, history, provenance, and governance.
- Citations complement and support text and are consistent in style with a work’s other citations.
- Citations tell readers about the writer’s research scope, the work’s sources, and their likely accuracy.
- Citations both facilitate research in progress and make finished products credible.

## Images of Sources: A Modern “Wrinkle”

### Citations’ Great Divide: Published—Unpublished

#### • Publications:

- ✓ Bear a formal title
- ✓ Are generally available
- ✓ Have many private owners
- ✓ Typically books, CD-ROM publications, web-sites, microfilm publications, and newspapers and other periodicals.

- ✓ Have less-flexible citation formats

#### • Unpublished sources

- ✓ Might or might not bear a title
- ✓ Include unpublished “research” or “preservation” microfilm
- ✓ Accessible in only one or a few venues
- ✓ Usually are unique
- ✓ Have more-flexible citation formats

Different citation “idioms” apply to published and unpublished sources.

1. Facsimile images may be published or unpublished. (See sidebar.)
2. If the unpublished image is an exact facsimile of an unpublished source, citing the image is optional. You may cite the original as if you viewed it directly.
3. Citing digital images and microfilm of unpublished sources—usually by appending this information to the citation of the original source—is conventional and helpful, especially for work in progress.
4. Citing unaltered photocopies of sources may be limited to instances where the original no longer exists or is inaccessible.
5. If you do not know the location of an original source viewed as an image or copy, you have no option but to cite the image or copy.
6. If you view a published facsimile image of a previously unpublished source (for example, NARA microfilm of a ship manifest, or a digital image of a pension file), cite the publication, not the original—the source has crossed the divide between unpublished and published.
7. If the image of a previously published source has been republished in facsimile (*Ancestry*’s digital images from NARA’s published microfilm, for example, or Bell & Howell’s microfilm publication of newspapers), you may cite (a) the previous publication (NARA microfilm or the newspaper alone), (b) the subsequent publication (*Ancestry* or Bell & Howell alone), or (c) both together in one citation (NARA and *Ancestry*; the newspaper and Bell & Howell).
8. If facsimile images of a previously published source have been republished in more than one venue (census microfilm images on *Ancestry*, *FamilySearch*, and *Fold3*, for example), you may cite none, one, or all the publication venues, depending on what is most helpful to you and your readers
9. Your decisions about which versions of facsimile images to cite and not cite should be consistent with your reasons for documentation.

## Essential References for Genealogical Documentation

Board for Certification of Genealogists. *Genealogy Standards*. Nashville, Tenn.: Ancestry, 2014.

Mills, Elizabeth Shown. *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*, 2nd edition. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 2009.

———. *Evidence Explained: Historical Analysis, Citation and Source Usage* (<http://evidenceexplained.com> : 2014).

*The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.