

Citing Sources: a simple guide for genealogy

1. For published books and articles, use the style guide that works best for the patron. The Chicago Manual of Style works well, as does MLA or APA>
2. For original records, here's a simple system that works well:

Type of record. Year. Jurisdiction. Date. Name(s). [Other identifying information ~ enumeration district, library/archives identifying number]. [Collection] [Repository, place, or website : accessed].

Samples:

Birth record. 1837. Salem, Essex County, Massachusetts. 5 May. PUTNAM, Nathaniel. Ancestry.com: accessed 20 May 2018.

Marriage record. 1773. St. Peter's Cathedral, Bradford, Yorkshire. 12 October. LEAROYD, John and OAKROYD, Hannah. Folio 3, item 7, p. 22. St. Peter's parish records. West Yorkshire Archive Service, Wakefield, Yorkshire.

Census return. 1870. Belfast, Waldo County, Maine. LITTLEFIELD, James. Household of John Littlefield. ED 2, p. 6, line 18. Familysearch.org: accessed 20 May 2018.

Probate file. 1910. Probate court, Erie County, New York. 19 May. ANDERSON, Thomas. Book 36, page 125. Court records, Erie County Hall, Buffalo, NY.

Remember:

The basic idea for citing sources is so that you or another researcher can find the same record again.

If you took science classes, think of it as a reproducible result.

Consistency is important ~ it helps you make sure you have included all the necessary information, while making it easier on anyone trying to use the citation.

It's one of the most important things that patrons will struggle with but you can make their long-term research easier by assisting them in developing good habits.

In the format, I've separated out the year because records are often filed by year as the first variable, so making that easy to see is helpful for trying to find a record again.