

Referencing - OSCOLA: Overview

This guide provides an overview of referencing using the OSCOLA style. OSCOLA (Oxford University Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities) is used on law programmes in the UK, as well as by publishers in the legal field. The guidance offered here is intended to introduce you to the basics of how to use this style. Further information on referencing different types of legal sources can be found in the *Cite them right* database, available through MetSearch, and at the University of Oxford: <https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/oscola>.

Basic principles

Whereas author-date (or Harvard) referencing uses in-text citations made up of the author name and year of publication (e.g. – (Smith, 1970)), OSCOLA referencing is based on the use of *footnotes*.

Small, superscript numbers (e.g. – ‘. . . in this case.’ – note the ‘1’ after the sentence) appear in the text which correspond to entries in a footnote in the footer of the page. Thus, when reading the text, when you come across a superscript number, you can identify the source being used by finding that number in the list of references at the bottom of the page.

Footnotes can be inserted easily into your work using Microsoft Word. Simply select ‘References’ in the main menu running across the top of the window and then ‘Insert Footnote’. Word will number the footnotes for you and give you an opportunity to add in the reference in the footer.

When using OSCOLA referencing, you are required to provide a bibliography – a full list of all sources used – at the end of your work.

Formatting references

The following information sets out the format of references for a small selection of sources you might use. For further guidance, we recommend checking *Cite them right*.

Primary sources

Cases

References to cases include the following information:

- Parties involved;

- Year of publication;
- Volume number;
- Nominate reporter abbreviation;
- First page number.

The reference would appear in the following way in the footnote (on first mention) and in the bibliography:

Blenkinsopp v. Blenkinsopp (1850) 12 Beav 568, 50 ER 1177
(*Example taken from *Cite them right*)

There must be at least one reference per case; often, however, there can be more than one.

Legislation

UK Acts of Parliament, for example, in both the footnote and bibliography, would appear as:

Act of Supremacy 1534

Secondary sources

Books

For books, include: author(s); title; edition; publisher; year of publication. In the footnote, the reference appears as:

¹² Catherine Elliott and Frances Quinn, *Tort Law* (8th edn, Longman 2011)

In the bibliography, it is:

Elliott C and Quinn F, *Tort Law* (8th edn, Longman 2011)

Abbreviations and bibliography

When referencing a source you’ve already included in a footnote, you can use an abbreviation. For example, in the case example used above, you might reference it again as ¹³ *Blenkinsopp* (n 1), where ‘n 1’ refers to its first appearance at footnote number 1.

For the bibliography, you might find it useful to separate it into sections: Cases, Legislation, and Secondary Sources.

For more information on these topics see the *Cite them right* database and the information provided by the University of Oxford noted above.

Email: academicskills@cardiffmet.ac.uk
Twitter: @CardiffMet_AST