MHRA Referencing Frequently Asked Questions

What is the difference between footnotes and a bibliography?

• Footnotes give additional information about the content, and bibliographic notes provide additional sources related to the content. The footnote is found at the bottom, or foot, of the page. It is marked by a superscript number within the body of the text. The superscript number also appears at the bottom of the page, along with the additional explanatory or bibliographic information. A bibliography is a detailed list of references but also includes background readings or other material that you may have read but not actually cited. Different courses may require just a reference list, just a bibliography, or even both. It is better to check with your tutor first. Both the reference list and the bibliography are located at the end of the work.

What do I do if the publication has no date?

• You simply write ‘n.d.’ in brackets where the year would go in the footnote, and in the bibliography. For example, (n.d).

Can I mix referencing styles?

• No, you should never mix referencing styles. Always be consistent.

When should I omit page numbers?

• If you are summarising what an author has argued in a book or article, you do not need to give page numbers.

Does the full stop go before or after in-text citations?

• Even when quoting, do not use a full stop until after your superscript number because the in-text citation is part of your sentence.

Can I cite lots of sources in the same sentence?

• Yes, but only cite more than one author in the same sentence if they make similar points or use similar methods or evidence. If this cannot be avoided separate each one with a comma. Simply use multiple superscript numbers to indicate this, for example;
  o It has been suggested in many studies²,³,⁴...

Are my footnotes included in my word count?

• Yes, they are counted in your word count. However, your bibliography is not counted in your word count.

What are DOIs?

• DOIs are digital object identifiers – a character string used to uniquely identify a digital object.
What sources can I legally use?

- At present copyright law allows only small extracts of items to be copied legally provided that they are referenced (and following the guidance herein fulfills that perfectly!) Only copy what is completely necessary, and if the use falls into one or more of the following categories:
  - personal private study;
  - non-commercial research;
  - criticism and review;
  - illustration for instruction;
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Students’ use will fall under personal private study, criticism and review, illustration, and/or quotation. For further information, go to: https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/copyright