

# OSCOLA Referencing

This guide will help you understand what referencing is and how it works. You will also need to refer to the OSCOLA handbook.

## What is OSCOLA referencing and why does it matter?

Referencing is an essential part of your academic work. Referencing allows you to:

- acknowledge the sources you have used as the basis for your research. Failure to do this could be regarded as **plagiarism**
- enable other people to identify and trace the source you have used
- support facts and claims you have made in your assignment
- show that you have read widely and used a variety of sources

There are a number of different styles of referencing but the School of Law specify using OSCOLA.

## Where can I learn more about OSCOLA referencing?

[https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxlaw/oscola\\_4th\\_edn\\_hart\\_2012.pdf](https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxlaw/oscola_4th_edn_hart_2012.pdf)

The definitive guide to OSCOLA referencing is the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the OSCOLA handbook. This is freely available online as a PDF.

[https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxlaw/oscola\\_4th\\_edn\\_hart\\_2012quickreferenceguide.pdf](https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxlaw/oscola_4th_edn_hart_2012quickreferenceguide.pdf)

There is also a quick guide to OSCOLA available as a PDF. This offers examples but not much explanation, so is only useful once you are comfortable with OSCOLA.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4jgZP22NY&list=PLdEJr33dPHM\\_3HE8\\_1BC-xjM4bLSdMNsB](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4jgZP22NY&list=PLdEJr33dPHM_3HE8_1BC-xjM4bLSdMNsB)

The Academic Liaison Librarian for Law has created this playlist of videos, covering lots of different aspects of OSCOLA referencing.

<https://www.brookes.ac.uk/library/resources-and-services/course-resource-help/law#oscola>

OSCOLA workshops run every semester and are open to any law student or any other student taking a law module.

## How do I create footnotes?

Every time you refer to or quote from a case, piece of legislation, book or journal article – or any other source – you should add a **footnote** with more details. Usually, you will also be expected to include a bibliography at the end of your essay. If you're not sure whether a bibliography is required, check with your module leader.

Footnotes come below the body of the text at the bottom of each page.

- If you're using **Microsoft Word**, put the cursor after the word(s) you want to reference. Go to the 'References' tab at the top and select 'insert footnote'. Alternatively, use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+Alt+F.
- If you're using **Google Docs**, put the cursor after the word(s) you want to reference. Go to the 'Insert' menu tab and select 'footnote'. Alternatively, use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+Alt+F.
- If you're using **Pages**, put the cursor after the word(s) you want to reference. Click on ¶ in the toolbar and choose 'footnote'.

In both these programs, your footnotes will automatically be given numbers. If you go back and insert a new footnote, your existing footnotes will automatically be renumbered.

Did you know? If you don't have Microsoft Word, you can sign up for Office 365 for \*free\* as an Oxford Brookes student. Go to <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/it/services/office-365/> and follow the instructions.

## What should footnotes look like in my work?

Look at this example to see how the footnote numbers sit in the body of the text, and then the footnotes sit at the bottom of the page.

EXAMPLE

Already, variations of the contractual retiring age following a transfer of undertakings have been challenged in *Power v Regent Security Ltd*.<sup>1</sup> In the old regime the Normal Retirement Age (NRA) and the State Retirement Age (SRA), which was 65, ruled out a finding of unfair dismissal, by making access to a tribunal dependent on being dismissed before the NRA or, in its absence, the SRA.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Power v Regent Security Ltd* [2007] EWCA Civ 1188, [2008] 2 All ER 977, 987.

<sup>2</sup> Claire Kilpatrick, 'Age, Retirement and the Employment Contract' (2007) 36 *Industrial Law Journal* 119, 121.

Specific advice is given in the OSCOLA handbook about how to format footnotes for different sources. Some useful tips that the handbook doesn't explain well are:

1. For books and journal articles, you should write the author's name in your footnote the same way as it is written in the source. So, if they use their full first name, you should use their full first name. However you should leave out any full stops after initials. For example, write HLA Hart rather than H.L.A. Hart
2. If there are more than three authors, just give the name of the first author followed by 'and others'.
3. An author can be an organisation or a company; it isn't always a named individual. This is often the case with webpages and reports.
4. If you are referencing a particular page in a book or article your footnote should end with two page numbers: the start page and the page you are referencing. This is called **pinpointing**, and is used in footnote 2 in the boxed example above.
5. If you are referencing a case from the High Court or above that was reported after 2001, you should include both **the neutral citation** and the most authoritative law report citation in your footnote.

## What is a bibliography?

A **bibliography** is a list of references, and comes at the end of your essay. All the references you used in your footnotes should be repeated in the bibliography. Remember the following points:

1. It is customary to have cases and legislation listed separately, before all the other sources.
2. Your references should be listed alphabetically by author's surname.
3. The author's surname should come first and their first name(s) should be shortened to initials. Authors' names are written differently in bibliographies and in footnotes.
4. You do not need to pinpoint particular pages. So references to cases and articles should conclude with a start page only.

To see points 3 and 4, compare the reference for Kilpatrick in the footnote example above and the bibliography example below.

EXAMPLE

Department of Trade and Industry, *Success at Work: Resolving Disputes in the Workplace* (Department of Trade and Industry 2007)  
Kilpatrick, C, 'Age, Retirement and the Employment Contract' (2007) 36 *Industrial Law Journal* 119  
Stredwick J, *Flexible Working* (2nd edn, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development 2005)

If you've used the same source multiple times in your essay, it only needs to be listed once in your bibliography.

## What if I can't find what I need in the OSCOLA handbook?

<https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/oscola-faqs>)

The OSCOLA FAQs contain guidance for some resources not included in the handbook, including podcasts, radio programmes and book reviews.

[https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxlaw/oscola\\_2006\\_citing\\_international\\_law.pdf](https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxlaw/oscola_2006_citing_international_law.pdf)

For international law, refer to the 2006 OSCOLA handbook. This area was not included in the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of 2012.

[https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxlaw/oscola\\_4th\\_edn\\_hart\\_2012.pdf](https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxlaw/oscola_4th_edn_hart_2012.pdf)

Section 3.4.1 of the OSCOLA handbook deals with general principles for referencing secondary sources that do not fall into any of the prescribed categories. Follow the OSCOLA rules as closely as possible and maintain consistency.

<https://youtu.be/sFYqTp76-H0>

Have a look at the video, 'What category does this source fall into?' which can help you decide which category of the OSCOLA handbook is most useful.

## How can I get more help with OSCOLA referencing?

If you are struggling with understanding OSCOLA or if you have lost marks on a piece of coursework because of your referencing you may find it helpful to have a chat with the Academic Liaison Librarian for Law. Her contact details are at the end of this guide. She can see you individually or in small groups.

Other useful resources include:

<http://libguides.ials.sas.ac.uk/content.php?pid=571308&sid=4711057>

This OSCOLA guide is produced by the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies. It contains the same information as the OSCOLA handbook, but it is broken it down into smaller sections, which can make it easier to use. Like the handbook, this contains examples of referencing you can follow.

<https://www.citethemrightonline-com.oxfordbrookes.idm.oclc.org/>

Cite Them Right helps you correctly reference a wide range of resources. It is easy to use, with templates that you can overwrite with your own data. It covers a range of referencing styles, **so always make sure the drop-down box says OSCOLA before following any examples!**

Not every format in Cite Them Right has an OSCOLA example so, in these instances, you will need to refer to the OSCOLA handbook. There is general advice about using quotations, avoiding plagiarism etc. under the 'basics' tab. NB: you will need your usual Brookes login details to access Cite Them Right.

<http://port.sas.ac.uk/mod/scorm/view.php?id=2231>

This great video from the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies covers all aspects of OSCOLA and contains short quizzes to test your skills. You do not need to register or log in - just click 'log in as guest'.

## Getting help and finding out more

More online information can be found on the Law help pages, at [www.brookes.ac.uk/library/subject-help/law](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/library/subject-help/law)

If you need any help with finding or using library resources for law please contact **Charlie Brampton** (Academic Liaison Librarian for Law) using the contact details below.

Email: [c.brampton@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:c.brampton@brookes.ac.uk)  
Tel: 01865 483077

Headington Library, JHB 112  
Oxford Brookes University.

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