Understanding and citing literature references

The examples given below should help you to cite-quote your own references, and to ‘decipher’ other people’s, which can often be difficult! Sometimes you may need to cite references in a specific format and use particular abbreviations and shortcuts to meet the editorial guidelines of a publication or accepted practice in your subject. These may be different from the examples given below, which are based on the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) ‘Guidelines for Authors’ (see section 5) downloadable from: www.rsc.org/Publishing/Journals/guidelines/AuthorGuidelines/JournalPolicy/index.asp

Literature references are usually grouped at the end of a journal article or book chapter and numbered, with the same numbers inserted at appropriate points in the text to ‘tie’ the text and references together. When writing references, be consistent and ensure the information will enable others to find the referenced item.

NB References are often abbreviated, for instance:
- the journal title given in an abbreviated form, often that used by Chemical Abstracts. You could try the CASSI Search Tool at cassi.cas.org/search.jsp (print CASSI is on Shelf 132 in the Chemistry Library), or the eJournal catalogue (abbreviated titles will often work) or search on Library Search (use * wildcard, eg chem* rev*). Alternatively, ask Library staff for help.
- the title of the journal article, or chapter for a book, left out;
- where there are a number of co-authors, listing just the first author mentioned followed by et al.;
- another commonly used shortcut is to use the word ibid., which means in the same book, or journal, referring to the previously mentioned reference.

A book
Author(s) initial(s) and surname(s), title of book in italics, publisher, place of publication, edition (except the first), and year of publication. Include page numbers if you are citing a specific part of the book.


An article/paper in a journal/periodical/serial
All author(s) initial(s) and surname(s) (RSC guidelines say that ‘et al.’ should not be used), abbreviated title of the journal (see above for advice) in italics, year, volume number (if applicable) in bold, and starting page number of the article. If volume and page numbers are not yet known a DOI (Digital Object Identifier) may be included instead. In some publisher guidelines the title of the article may be inserted between author(s) and the journal title. Normally, the issue number in the volume and the calendar date of the issue are not included – only include these if they are essential to locate the reference (if, for instance, the pagination of each issue begins at p1)


Continued…
**A book with chapters written by different authors**

Many books have chapters written by different author(s), and the whole book is edited by someone else. ‘Chapter’ author(s) initial(s) and surname(s), the word ‘in’, title of book in italics, editor(s), publisher, place of publication, edition (except the first), year of publication, volume and chapter (if applicable), and the page numbers for the chapter. In some publisher guidelines the chapter title may be included between the author(s) and ‘in’.


**A thesis**

Author initial(s) and surname(s), degree awarded, academic institution awarding the degree, and the date. In some publisher guidelines the title of the thesis may be inserted after the author’s name.


**A patent**

Country code, patent number, and the date of the patent. The RSC style of patent reference is very short!


**A report**

Author(s) initial(s) and surname(s), title of report in italics, report number, publisher, place of publication, and date of publication. Also consider mentioning availability - reports can be difficult to track down.


**A paper in the proceedings of a conference/symposium/meeting**

Author(s) initial(s) and surname(s), the word ‘in’, title of conference, editor(s) of the proceedings, place of publication, publisher, date of publication and volume (if appropriate) and page numbers of the paper. In some publisher guidelines the title of the paper is inserted after the author(s) name(s).


**Internet / Web address**

Note that web pages are rarely referenced in academic papers - partly because they are prone to change/moving/disappearing. If known put the Author(s) initial(s) and surname(s), title, publisher, place of publication, and date of publication and make sure you include the URL (Universal Resource Locator) and the date accessed. NB: double check the URL works!


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**Reference management software** is available such as EndNote Online/Basic (formerly EndNote Web) or the desktop version EndNote. These can help you to maintain a database of useful references, see [www.bris.ac.uk/library/support/subjects/chemistry/#endnote](http://www.bris.ac.uk/library/support/subjects/chemistry/#endnote) for details.

The Subject Librarian for Chemistry [www.bris.ac.uk/library/support/subjects/](http://www.bris.ac.uk/library/support/subjects/) is skilled at deciphering literature references, and can also advise on quoting references.