What is SBL Documentation?

The Society of Biblical Literature publishes a manual with guidelines for the style, organization, and format of papers written in the fields of Biblical and Early Christian Studies. If you are taking a Bible course, there is a good chance that your instructor will ask you to write your papers in accordance with SBL guidelines. The current (2nd) edition of SBL is very similar to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th Edition, with some notable differences involving references to materials related to Biblical studies.

**FORMATTING A PAPER**

- Use an academic 12-point font.

- Double-space your document throughout except for block quotes of 5 lines or more.

- Use 1” margins on all sides of the body of your paper.

- Include a title page with 2” top and bottom margin and all elements centered with 2” between them. Write elements out in all caps. (See example below.)

- Center the first page number at the bottom of the page. Align subsequent page numbers in the top right corner.

**Examples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title Page</th>
<th>First Page</th>
<th>Body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AZUSA/PACIFIC UNIVERSITY</td>
<td>Title Center the first page number at the bottom of the page. Double-space your document throughout. Use an academic 12-point font. Use 1” margins on all sides of the body of our paper. Center the first page number at the bottom of the page. Double-space your document throughout. 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[PAPER TITLE]</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBMITTED TO [PROF]</td>
<td>Align subsequent page numbers in the top right corner. Align subsequent page numbers in the top right corner. Align subsequent page numbers in the top right corner. Align subsequent page numbers in the top right corner. Align subsequent page numbers in the top right corner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF [COURSE #] – [COURSE]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By [AUTHOR NAME]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[MONTH DAY, YEAR]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CITING THE BIBLE

Biblical passages are referenced parenthetically within the final punctuation of the sentence. Do not include Biblical references in footnotes or in the bibliography. Mention the translation if more than one translation is used in the paper.

Examples

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:2 ESV).

The events transpired “in the ninth year of King Zedekiah of Judah, in the tenth month” (Jer 39:1).


NOTE: Do not include sacred texts like the Bible on the reference page unless directed by your professor. For more information, see our “Citing the Bible” handout.

ABBREVIATIONS – BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

See our “Citing the Bible” handout for a full list of biblical abbreviations.

FOOTNOTES

SBL uses footnote citations instead of the in-text parenthetical citations used in MLA and APA. Regardless of whether the author is mentioned in the signal phrase (a phrase that introduces a quotation) or not, quotations and paraphrases are cited using footnotes (or endnotes).

Formatting

- Separate text from footnotes by 2”.
- Single-space footnotes throughout.
- Indent only the first line of each entry.
- Insert a blank line between footnotes.
- Use a superscripted number that matches the reference in the text.
- Maintain subsequent numbering throughout the paper.

Examples

The first footnote referring to a source should have complete publication data, but subsequent footnotes for the same source can use a shortened title. Below are some sample citations showing how to reference the work in your first footnote and how to reference the work in subsequent footnotes.

Famous city names (e.g., London) are printed as-is. If it is a less well-known city, include the state, province, or country name as well.
Book with one author (6.2.1)

15 Name, *Book Title* (Publishing City: Publisher, Year), Page.


Book with two or three authors (6.2.2)


Book by more than three authors (6.2.3)


9 Scott et al., *Reading New Testament Greek*, 42.

Book with one editor (6.2.6)


Book with two or three editors (6.2.7)


47 Kraft and Nickelsburg, *Early Judaism*, xii.

Book with more than three editors (6.2.8)


45 Oates et al., *Checklist of Editions*, 10.

Book with both author and editor (6.2.9)


Book with author, editor, and translator (6.2.10)


Translated volume (6.2.4)


Article in an edited volume (6.2.12)


NOTE: If subsequent references could be confused with another article by the same author, include the information concerning the editors. For example:


A revised edition (6.2.16)


Reprint of a recent title (6.2.18)


15 Seters, *In Search of History*, 35.

Multivolume work (6.2.20)


Journal article (6.3.1)


NOTE: For articles written by more than one author, follow the examples above in 7.2.2–3. It is not necessary to include the issue number unless the journal volume is not paginated consecutively (see 7.2.31).

Article in an encyclopedia or dictionary (6.36)

NOTE: This form also applies to an article in a lexicon or theological dictionary if the specific entry is cited in the bibliography.


Article in a lexicon or theological dictionary (6.37)

For the discussion of a word or a family of words, give the entire title and page range of the article:


Subsequent entries need to include only the dictionary volume and page numbers:

147 Dahn and Liefeld, *NIDNTT* 3:514.
Article in a magazine (6.3.9)


BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Every source cited in your paper (except for personal communications and sacred texts, such as the Bible) must have a listing on the reference page with full bibliographical information.
- Alphabetize citations by author or by title if no author is available.
- The first line of each citation is not indented. If the citation exceeds one line, tab every subsequent line over by half an inch by adjusting the hanging indent slider on the ruler at the top of your word processor.
- Leave a 2” top margin. Center “Bibliography” (no quotation marks) on the first line.
- Single-spaced entries with a blank line between them.
- Center the page number at the bottom of the first page of the Bibliography. On subsequent pages, align the page number in the top right corner.

Examples

Book with one author (6.2.1)

Last, First. Full Title. City: Publisher, Year.


Book with two or three authors (6.2.2)


Book by more than three authors (6.2.3)


Book with one editor (6.2.6)


Book with two or three editors (6.2.7)


Book with more than three editors (6.2.8)


Book with both author and editor (6.2.9)

Book with author, editor, and translator (6.2.10)


Translated volume (6.2.4)


Full history of a translated volume (6.2.5)


Article in an edited volume (6.2.12)


Introduction, preface, or foreword written by someone other than the author (6.2.14)


Revised edition (6.2.16)


Titled volume in a multivolume work (6.2.21)


Multivolume Work (6.2.20)


Journal Article (6.3.1)


Article in an encyclopedia or dictionary (6.3.6)

This form also applies to an article in a lexicon or theological dictionary if the specific entry is cited in the bibliography.


Article in a lexicon or theological dictionary (6.3.7)

In the bibliography, cite only the theological dictionary:


* This sheet is intended for use as a quick reference for the most common citations and does not contain everything you will ever need to know about SBL. Please take advantage of the other resources we offer.