



AAC Writing Center – Using Footnotes

What are footnotes?

Footnotes are notes placed at the bottom of a page. They cite references or make comments about a designated part of the text above it. A footnote would be useful if you wanted to add an interesting comment to a sentence you have written, but the comment is not directly related to the argument of your paragraph.

Footnotes also refer to relevant sources -- they let your reader know where certain material came from, or where they can look for other sources on the subject. Footnotes are also a good way to provide your reader with evaluative comments, such as when a resource was particularly useful.

To decide whether you should cite your sources in footnotes or in the body of your paper, you should ask your instructor. You should note, though, that long explanatory notes can be distracting to readers. Most academic style guidelines (including MLA and APA) recommend limited use of footnotes/endnotes.

Footnotes in **MLA format** are indicated by consecutively-numbered superscript numbers in the main text after the punctuation of the phrase or clause the note refers to.¹

What's the difference between footnotes and endnotes?

The only real difference is placement -- footnotes appear at the bottom of the relevant page, while endnotes all appear at the end of your document. If you want your reader to read your notes right away, footnotes are more likely to get your reader's attention. Endnotes, on the other hand, are less intrusive and will not interrupt the flow of your paper.

How do I make a footnote?

Footnotes are easy to include if you're using Microsoft Word 2007!

1. On the **References** tab, click the Footnotes and Endnotes dialog box launcher, which looks like this:



2. Click the Insert Footnote box. Word will automatically start numbering your footnotes; you can also add footnotes to your quick access toolbar.
3. If you get confused, Microsoft Office online has an easy tutorial for using footnotes with Word.

¹ For more information on documenting sources, see Purdue University's Online Writing Lab:
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/index.html>