

‘Writing your Family History TIMELINE, rather than a family tree’

“What is the difference between Genealogy and Family History” – Genealogy, strictly speaking, is the discipline of building a family tree, through finding evidence from the study of sources as to how generations are linked. Family History is the writing of ancestors’ biographies – a study not only of relations, but also of the communities they lived in, placing them in their wider social context, according to: **The Society of Genealogists, London**

Writing a family history ‘timeline’ with information and dates of important historical events, interspersed between dates and details of your ancestors births, marriages and deaths, together with census information etc., can help build-up an understanding of the passing of time, over the generations.

When you write any form of family history, or even just make a family tree available online, you should always aim to allow your future readers to go back and check the details for themselves. They may be looking for links to other families and historical events; they may have access to new data that permits an altered interpretation. The trail that you leave needs to show others who follow exactly where you found your facts. The clues you leave are the references you cite. The reference, therefore, must be clear and unambiguous so that the trail can be retraced.

Referencing is quite simply providing details of where you found your information...

Citation takes place within your text and provides a pointer to the reference for the source you have made use of...

So, you must cite and give references for assertions of fact that cannot be presumed to be common knowledge, direct quotations or paraphrases of other writers, tables and diagrams.

There are three interlocking parts to citing and referencing within your writing;

1. Indicating your use of information from another source within your work – i.e., citing.
2. Creating individual references for each source you’ve cited within your work.
3. Linking the citation of the information within your work (from point 1), through the use of a superscript number, to corresponding individual reference (that you created as point 2) in endnotes collected at the end of the whole document.

Citation and referencing is an antidote to plagiarism. Plagiarism, quite simply, is passing off other people's work as your own and is unacceptable because it is a form of theft – in this case intellectual property, you should cite material you have studied and taken note of when preparing a piece of genealogical work or a family history. Detecting plagiarism is easier now than ever before and is rapidly becoming easier still with good software systems. To avoid all possible misunderstandings in anything you write, the message is: **Cite and reference all your sources.**

The nature of genealogical investigation has altered dramatically over the course of the past decade. The digitisation of documents and their availability online has transformed techniques of investigation and changed what we understand of the nature of sources.

For references that deal with data found within most **subscription** databases, it makes more sense to give just the 'root' URL for that provider. This means giving the URL that takes the user to the home page of the website (akin, to identifying the publisher). 'Short' or 'generic' URL provision covers such databases as: Ancestry; FindMyPast; ScotlandsPeople; the Genealogist; MyHeritage; most newspaper and article databases accessed through online providers, or a university website; and others.

A caution is that there are restrictions on publishing information about living people. Publication means in the public domain and, as such, you should therefore be very careful as to what is made available about people who are still alive and you must always get their written permission, this also applies to any photographic/digital images you may want to use.

An excellent book on the guidance and explanation of 'referencing' and 'citation' which you might like to consider, which may be available at the library however, if not, it's available to purchase from Amazon.co.uk

CITATION:

Macdonald, Ian G. 2018. *Referencing for Genealogists Sources and Citation*. Stroud: The History Press

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