Citing references

Vancouver Style

In the Vancouver Style, a number is assigned to each reference as it is used. Even if the author is named in your text, a number must still be used. The original number assigned to the reference is used each time that reference is cited in the text. The first reference you cite will be numbered 1 in the text, and the second reference you cite will be numbered 2, and so on. But, if you cite reference number 1 again later in the text, you will cite it using the number 1.

References are listed in numerical order in a bibliography at the end of your essay.

The references in the bibliography must follow a set format, and there are examples of this below.

The number can be placed outside the text punctuation to avoid disruption to the flow of the text, or be placed inside the text punctuation. The latter is preferred at Leicester.

The titles of journals should be abbreviated according to the style used in Medline. Abbreviated titles can be found in the PubMed Journals Database at http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/journals.

Here is an example of a piece of text which uses the Vancouver Style.


Obstruction of the central airways, the trachea and mainstem bronchi, can result from a variety of disease processes and is the cause of significant morbidity and mortality. Although the actual incidence and prevalence of central airway obstruction (CAO) are unknown, the epidemiology of lung cancer would suggest an increasing number of patients develop complications of proximal endobronchial disease (1). An estimated 20–30% of patients with lung cancer will develop complications associated with airway obstruction (atelectasis, pneumonia, dyspnea, etc.) (2) …


Remember that a reference to a journal article will need:

- The **year** when the journal was published.
- The **volume number**. There may be one volume or more, per year.
- Perhaps a **part number**. Volumes may be published in several parts. Generally in the Vancouver style you can omit the part number unless each part of the journal starts numbering pages at page 1 or the reference is from a supplement.
- The **page numbers** of the article itself. If the article is on pages 11-15, in the Vancouver style you can abbreviate this to 11-5.

Here are the rules for formatting references in a bibliography according to the Vancouver Style.

1. **Journal articles**

1.1 **Personal authors**

2004 is the year of publication, 169 the volume number and 634-7 the page numbers, that is, pages 634-637. The journal title is abbreviated using the abbreviation used in Medline, and this abbreviation is followed by a full stop.

List all authors – you may find that in older texts using the Vancouver style, only the first six authors are listed.

1.2 **Corporate authors**

1.3 **No author given**

If you read the article online, then you need to cite the online version: see **Electronic sources** in section 3 below.

2. **Books and other monographs**

2.1 **Personal author(s)**
O’Callaghan C, Stephenson T. Pocket paediatrics. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone; 2004

2.2 **Editor, compiler**

2.3 **A chapter in a book**

3. **Online sources**
If the source is on the web, include the date when you accessed it (as [cited...])

3.1 **Online journals**

3.2 **Websites**

3.3 **The British National Formulary online**
4. Conferences

4.1 A whole conference

4.2 A conference paper

5. Newspaper articles

6. Video and CD-ROM


7. Lecture notes

Where to get more help
The official guide to the Vancouver style, with plentiful examples of the things included on this website, and things not included is the NLM publication Citing Medicine, available at http://www.nlm.nih.gov/citingmedicine. If Citing Medicine and this article disagree, please accept Citing Medicine as the correct version, and please let us know.