HOW TO CITE GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS
There is no single recognized standard for citing government publications.

Most citation styles, including APA, MLA, Chicago and The Bluebook, provide sample government publication citations.

Examples here are based on Garner and Cheney’s *The Complete Guide to Citing Government Information Resources*, and may be adapted to different citation styles.
Your instructor will provide guidance on his/her expectations for citations.

These instructions often specify the preferred citation style for the course, for example, APA, MLA, or Chicago.
Ask four key questions

- **Who** = Author
- **What** = Title
- **When** = Date
- **Where** = Geopolitical origin of the work and place of publication

These are the basic parts of a citation. Government publication citations may also include a few less familiar elements like *series names* or *agency publication numbers*.
First, identify the author or authors: government, personal, or both.

Government publications usually have agency or department authors rather than personal authors; an organization author is often called a corporate author. The Department of State and FBI or Federal Bureau of Investigation are examples of government authors.
Government author names reflect organizational hierarchy. If an agency is well known, its parent organization isn’t included in the citation. Less familiar agencies are identified with their organizational parents.

For example:


Most government publication citations begin with a country, community, state, or regional name...a geopolitical identifier.

For example:

**United States.** Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations.

**U.S.** Dept. of Homeland Security.

**Massachusetts.** Department of Revenue.

Be aware of the conventions for your citation style. For example in MLA style, United States is spelled out, while APA uses the abbreviation, U.S.

In our example, WHO, the agency author, is the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration. WHERE, the U.S., is spelled out in MLA style and abbreviated in APA.

Sometimes a government publication also has a personal author. When this is the case, the author’s name is added to the citation, usually after the title.

**WHAT**, the title, is *A Century at Langley*. Titles of government publications are italicized. Make sure to check for a subtitle—our example has one— it’s *The storied legacy and soaring future of NASA Langley Research Center*.

Sometimes, additional information follows the title, for example, an edition, a publication or report number, and a format indicator (microfiche or map).

You can usually find this information in the publication itself, or in a library catalog like Scholar OneSearch.
Often, a department or agency author is also the publisher. However, there are occasions in which this is not the case.

If not otherwise specified, it's generally assumed that the material was printed by the GPO or Government Publishing Office; use the GPO as the publisher.

You may have to search for the publisher information since it's not always provided on the publication's title page.
### Completing the citation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>A century at Langley: the storied legacy and soaring future of NASA Langley Research Center</th>
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<td>Alternative Title</td>
<td>Century at Langley: the storied legacy and soaring future of NASA Langley Research Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Chambers, Joseph R., United States. National Aeronautics and Space Administration, issuing body.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
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Scholar OneSearch can help us track down the publisher information for government documents. In this example, we can find basic citation information including the title, government and personal authors, series name, publisher, place of publication, and date.
You can also try the Catalog of U.S. Government Publications to find the missing elements for your citations.

Like Scholar OneSearch, the CGP provides the title, personal and government author names, place of publication, publisher, and date.

Using Scholar OneSearch, we were able to identify the last two parts of our citation—the publisher and the publication date.
Print and online citations are often quite similar. Here, a URL and access date are added to the citation:

Most standard documentation styles recommend The Bluebook for citing legal and legislative documents. The Legal Information Institute at Cornell University provides an online guide to commonly used legal citations; this work is based on The Bluebook.
Citation management software like RefWorks, Zotero, or EndNote don’t generally work well with government publications. Expect to do a lot of editing!
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