Referencing using Vancouver style

The Vancouver style of referencing is so named because it was first published by the Vancouver Group, which expanded and evolved into the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE).

ICMJE produces and updates their guidelines for publication, which are known as the Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals. These guidelines are available on the ICMJE web site. For referencing formats consistent with the Uniform requirements, users are directed to the sample reference list in the Vancouver style, which is available on the web site of the United States National Library of Medicine (NLM). The Vancouver style is largely based on the style NLM uses for its databases.

Even though Vancouver is the mostly used style by many medical journals, you should always check with your supervisor, academic staff (lecturer or tutor) to make sure this is the recommended style for your research project or paper.

Your assignment will present facts and conclusions based on those facts. It is necessary to reference the sources of your information. This establishes the authority of your work and acknowledges the researchers and writers you have drawn on in your paper. You must reference all material you use from all sources and acknowledge your sources in the body of your paper each time you use a fact, a conclusion, an idea or a finding from someone's work.
It is necessary to cite your sources each time you:

■ reproduce an author's exact words (quote), that is, copy word for word directly from a text
■ use your own wording (summarize or paraphrase) to explain or discuss what someone has said.

If you copy an entire table, chart, diagram or graph or if you take only some of the data contained in such sources, you must provide a reference.

Sources such as journals, books, encyclopedias, computer programs and software, information from the internet, reports, newspapers, interviews, radio and television must be cited in the body of your paper and detailed in a reference list at the end.

**Vancouver style**

The Vancouver style consists of the following elements:

(1) citations in the body of the paper, using consecutive numbers in parentheses. Note that some journals use superscript (raised) numbers rather than numbers in parentheses.

(2) a numbered reference list at the end of the paper giving the details of each source referred to.

Part 1 of this resource deals with citing sources in the body of the paper.

Part 2 deals with how to present reference entries for some of the common types of sources that students are likely to use in their assignments.
**Part 1: In-text citations**

In-text citations are references provided in the body of a paper to each work cited - books, journal articles, reports, material from the internet and the like. Consecutive numbers (either in parentheses or superscript) are used for the sources cited.

The same number is used for a source throughout a paper. This number is determined by the first citation of the source. So, for example, if a work is the fourth source cited in a paper, it will be referred to as (4) or by the superscript number 4 throughout that paper.

When two or more references appear at the same point in the text, the relevant numbers are separated by commas, e.g. (4, 7) or \(^4,7\) if using superscript. Three or more consecutive citations are joined by a hyphen, e.g. (4-7) or \(^4-7\).

**Reference numbers are usually placed outside full stops and commas, but journals vary in their practice.**

**Part 2: Collating a reference list**

An important purpose of the reference list is to identify the sources cited in the paper so that readers can locate them. The reference list should appear at the end of the paper and provide the full bibliographic information about the sources cited. The list is arranged in numerical order, so readers can go from the number in the body of the paper to the full details of the source.

Initials follow the family names of authors and editors, with no space or full stops between the initials of an author, e.g. Halpern SD, Ubel PA, Caplan AL.

Commas are used to separate each author's name. Note that 'and' is not used to separate the last two names.

Each entry is set flush against the left margin, and the number is followed by a full stop, as in the examples that follow.

**Organisation as author**

For a journal article that lists an organisation (rather than an individual) as an author, provide the name of the organisation in the author position.

**Example:**

**Book**

When listing a book in a reference list, note the following points:

As for a journal article, for a book written by more than six authors, the names of the first six are provided, followed by the phrase 'et al'.

If the author is an organisation, the organisation name is provided in the author position, as for a journal article.

Book titles, like journal article titles, use minimal capitalisation.

Edition number is provided only for second (or later) editions.

Full stops are used after the last author's initials, after the book title, after the edition number (if provided) and at the end of the entry.

The city of publication is followed by a colon (with a space after it) and the publisher is followed by a semicolon (with a space after it).

A relatively unknown city/place of publication is followed by state or country abbreviation in parentheses, e.g. White Plains (NY).

**Personal author(s)**

The following information is included, in the following order: author(s), book title, edition number (if not the first), city, publisher, year.

**Example:**


**Chapter in a book**

In your assignments you may want to refer to an article, report or chapter in an edited book containing contributions by a number of writers. In this instance, you need to acknowledge the author(s) whose work you are citing with a number in parentheses (or a superscript number) at the relevant point in your paper, as you would for journal articles, books and other sources.

In the reference list entry you need to give the name of the author(s) you cited plus the chapter title and information about the publication in which the work appears. The following information
is included: author(s) cited, chapter title, editor(s), title of the book in which the work appears, city, publisher, year, volume number (if applicable) and page numbers.

Follow the standard format for a book when presenting author, title, city and publisher of the book in which the chapter appears.

Minimal capitalisation is used for the chapter title, as for the book title.

The word 'In' is used to introduce the book in which the chapter appears.

The page range is provided, i.e. the first and last page numbers of the article, limited to those needed for clarity, without repeating digits unnecessarily.

Note that the letter p. (for 'page' or 'pages') is used for chapters in books. The letter p. is not used for page numbers of journal articles.

**Example:**


**Newspaper article**

For a newspaper article, the following information is provided: author(s) if given, title of article, title of newspaper, year, month, day, section (if applicable), page or pages, column number.

Minimal capitalisation is used for the article title.

Maximal capitalisation is used for the newspaper title, i.e. all major words are capitalised.

Note the abbreviations: Sect. for section; col. for column; months are abbreviated to the first three letters.

The date is followed by a semicolon (with no space after it) and the section is followed by a colon (with no space after it).

Section may not always be applicable.

**Example:**

**Audio-visual material**

For referencing audio-visual material such as audiotapes, videocassettes, slides and films, follow the format for a book and indicate the medium, i.e. the type of material, in square brackets after the title.

**Example:**


**Electronic material**

**CD-Rom**

For referencing a CD-ROM, follow the format for a book and indicate the medium in square brackets after the title, i.e. [CD-ROM].

**Example:**


**Journal article on the internet**

To reference a journal article published on the internet, provide the bibliographic details as for a print journal, with the following additions:

After the abbreviated journal title, add the word 'Internet' in square brackets.

Add the date you cited the material, providing year, month (abbreviated) and day in square brackets, with no punctuation marks, followed by a semicolon, e.g. [cited 2010 Aug 12];

After the volume and issue number, provide an indication of the number of pages or the number of screens in square brackets, e.g. [about 1 p.].

Use the phrase 'Available from:' followed by the URL (web address).
Example:


Article with a Digital Object Identifier (DOI)

If an article has a DOI, this should be provided after the page number details. The number is added after the letters 'doi'.

Example:


Home page/web site

For referencing a home page/web site it is necessary to provide the title of the home page/web site followed by the word 'Internet' in square brackets. Headquarters (city) of the organisation and the name of the organisation should be provided, together with the copyright date or span of dates. The date of update and the date the material was cited should be given in square brackets. The URL is provided after the phrase 'Available from:

Example:


Note that standards for referencing material from the internet are still being developed. You will see certain variations in the referencing of online materials among journals that use the Vancouver style, just as there are slight differences in their referencing of print sources.

It is important to be consistent in referencing sources within a paper, and to maintain as much style consistency as possible between the referencing of print and online sources.