

FORMATS FOR SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

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(**NOTE:** This author has adopted the non-standard policy of using bold type for chapters as an aid to the eye in distinguishing chapters and verses. That practice helps especially with long lists of chapters-and-verses as in **1 Kings 21:21, 29; 2 Kings 6:33; 21:12; 22:16.**)

1. basic format for chapter and verse: John **11:35** (in computer John **11:35**)

not: John **11**³⁵

not: John **11,35**

not: John **11;35**

not: John **11.35**

not: John **11: 35**

not preferable: John XI.32 or John XI,32

NOTE: In general, Roman numerals are falling out of usage.

NOTE: This author has adopted the practice of bold facing chapter designations. The practice is particularly helpful in long listing of references.

2. format for a chapter-verse series of two in a sentence: John **11:35**; 1 Thessalonians **5:16**

not: John **11:35**, 1 Thessalonians **5:16**

not: John **11:35. 1 Thessalonians 5:16**

3. format for a chapter-verse series of more than two in a sentence: John **11:35**; 1 Thessalonians **5:16**; Hebrews **13:25**

possible: John **11:35**, 1 Thessalonians **5:16**, and Hebrews **13:25**

not: John **11:35** and 1 Thessalonians **5:16** and Hebrews **13:25**

4. format for books that have verse divisions only: Jude 2 (cp. Obadiah, Philemon, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John)

not: Jude **1:2**, and the like

That enables you to tell the difference between Phil. 1 (Philemon) and Phil.**1:1** (Philippians).

5. format for more than one book with the same name: 1 John, 2 John, 3 John

not: 1st John, 2nd John, 3rd John

not preferable: I John, II John, III John

NOTE: Roman numerals are falling out of usage.

NOTE: The cases where there are two or more books with the same name are 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, 1 & 2 Corinthians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, 1 & 2 Peter; 1, 2 & 3 John.

6. format in a sentence: From John **11:35** we know that Jesus could feel sorrow.

not: From Jn. **11:35** we know that Jesus could feel sorrow.

not: From John chapter eleven, verse thirty-five we know that Jesus could feel sorrow [Although in reading, we word out scripture references, in writing it is unnecessarily cumbersome.]

NOTE: Do not abbreviate in a regular sentence except perhaps in an information footnote. To save space, Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, and other reference tools sometimes abbreviate even without periods even outside parentheses; but the procedure is not customary in standard situations.

7. format for more than one verse within a chapter: John **10:7, 9, 11, 13; 14:6**

not: John **10:7; 10:9; 10:11; 10:13; 14:6**

8. format for more than one chapter in a series: Mark **16**, John **6, 8**

10. format for a mix between plain chapters and chapters with verse sub-divisions: Mark **16**, John **6, 8**; Romans **16:25-27**; 1 John **5**

11. format for a set of verses: John **10:7-18; 14:1-6**

not: John **10:7-10:18; 14:1-14:6**

not: John **10:7-18; 14:1 - 6**

12. format for a set of verses with one verse emphasized: John **10:7-9-19**

13. format for a set of chapters without sub-divisions: Matthew **5-7**

not necessary: Matthew **5:1-7:29** (only 29 verses in Matthew **7**)

14. format for a set of verses that crosses chapter divisions: John **7:53-8:11**

not: John **7:53 through 8:11**

not: John **7:53; 8:1-11** (only 53 verses in John **7**)

not: Hebrews **10:32-39; 11:1-12** (39 verses in Hebrews **10**)

15. format for reference to part of a verse: 2 Peter **2:1b** corresponds with Jude 4d.

16. format within parenthesis: (John **11:35**) or (John **11:35**)

not: (John **11:35**)

NOTE: Whether the book reference is abbreviated depends on how familiar the reader is likely to be with the names of biblical books.

17. format for a chapter-verse series within parenthesis: (John **11:35**; 1 Thessalonians **5:16**; Hebrews **13:25**)

18. reference with a statement: “Jesus wept” (John **11:35**).

not: “Jesus wept.” (John **11:35**)

not: “Jesus wept (John **11:35**).”

not customary: “Jesus wept [John **11:35**].”

19. references with a question: “*What is truth?*” (John **18:38**).

not: “*What is truth?*” (John **18:38**)

not: “*What is truth*” (John **18:38**)?

not customary: “What is truth [John **18:38**]?”

20. reference with an exclamation: “*Forgive me this wrong!*” (1 Corinthians **12:13**).

not: “*Forgive me this wrong!*” (1 Corinthians **12:13**)

not: “*Forgive me this wrong* (1 Corinthians **12:13**)!”

not customary: “*Forgive me this wrong* [1 Corinthians **12:13**]!”

21. reference with a reference: “Now this, He ascended [Psalm **68:18**], what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth?” (Ephesians **4:9**).

22. format for indicating comparable statements: “*Love covers a multitude of sins*” (James **5:20**; cp. 1 Peter **4:8**; Proverbs **10:12**).

23. format for indicating contrasting ideas: Often we must combine differing principles in order to deal with the complete picture (Proverbs **26:4** vs. **26:5**; Galatians **6:2** vs. **6:5**).

24. Sentences do not begin with numbers; consequently, sentences with a scripture reference should be arranged to avoid beginning with the chapter-verse reference : John **3:16** may be the start of the gospel writer’s words.

not: **3:16** may be the start of the writer’s words in the fourth gospel.

25. A sentence may begin with the number that identifies one book of two or three books with the same name: 2 Peter **2** has many parallels with the Book of Jude.

not: Second Peter **2** has many parallels with the Book of Jude.

26. abbreviations for books of the Bible

Gen. Ex. Lev. Num. Deut. [Dt.] Josh. Jud. Ruth 1 Sam. 2 Sam. 1 Kg. 2 Kg. 1 Ch. 2 Ch. Ezra Neh. Esther [Es.] Job Ps. Pro. [Pr., Prov.] Eccl. Song of Sol. [S. of Sol.] Is. Jer. Lam. Dan. Hos. Joel Amos Obad. [Ob.] Jon. Mic. Nah. Hab. Zeph. Hag. Zech. Mal. Mt. Mk. Lk. Jn. Acts Rom. 1 Cor. 2 Cor. Gal. Eph. Phil. Col. 1 Th. 2 Th. 1 Tim. 2 Tim. Tit. Heb. James [Ja.] 1 Pet. 2 Pet. 1 Jn. 2 Jn. 3 Jn. Jude Rev.

NOTE: If your group of citations includes apocryphal works, a distinction needs to be made between Ecclesiastes and Ecclesiasticus. Using Eccl. for both will be confusing. Sometimes Ecclus. is used for the latter.

NOTE: It is probably best not to abbreviate the underlined books at all. Sometimes writers abbreviate these short books in some way, but there is not much reason to create an abbreviation that is virtually as long as the unabbreviated form (Ac. for Acts, Exod. for Exodus, Judg. for Judges, Jb. for Job, Ju. for Jude, *e.g.*). The suggestions above do use Mk. and Lk., Jn. to create uniformity across all four gospels. Using Ez. for Ezra is not advisable because it could be mistaken for Ezekiel. The same thing could be said about Jo. for Job: it would create confusion with Jonah, John. Nevertheless, Phil. can be used for both Philippians and Philemon because the latter has no chapter divisions.

28. reference to a psalm without verse reference in a sentence format: The term *Messiah* is introduced into the Old Testament in Psalm **2**.

not preferable: The term *Messiah* is introduced into the Old Testament in Psalms **2**.

29. format for citation from a specific version, or translation, of the Bible: John **3:16** (NIV)
30. format for parenthetical citation from a specific version: (Jn. **3:16** NIV; Ephesians **2:3** NASB)

not: (John **3:16** [NIV]; Ephesians **2:3** [NASB])

31. standard abbreviations for common translations in current use

American Standard Version (ASV)
 Conversational Version (CV)
 King James Version (KJV, or AV = Authorized Version)
 New American Standard Bible (NASB)
 New English Bible (NEB)
 New International Version (NIV)
 New King James Version (NKJV)
 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
 New Living Translation (NLT)
 Revised Standard Version (RSV)
 Today's English Version [= Good News for Modern Man] (TEV).

NOTE: Specify the translation if you are quoting the exact wording, unless that wording is common to other translations. If all the references in a document come from the same version, indicate the version in a footnote or introductory comment in order to avoid unnecessary repetition. In some cases, it may be necessary to indicate which edition of a translation you are using; Today's English Version, for example, has gone through several editions since it was first published.

32. book-chapter-verse references in a sentence: The most familiar verse in the Bible is John 3:16.

not: The most familiar verse in the Bible is John 3:16.

not: The most familiar verse in the Bible is "John 3:16."

NOTE: It is customary to italicize whole, free-standing works and to put quotation marks around sub-units within a whole. The Bible, however, is so well known that these conventions have dropped out of usage.

33. The Book of Acts provides the historical framework we have for most of the epistles of Paul.

not customary: The book of Acts provides the historical framework we have for most of the epistles of Paul.

NOTE: The same pattern applies to the Gospel of John, the Epistle of First Corinthians, the Apocalypse of John.

34. Paul is the author of First Corinthians.

also acceptable: Paul is the author of 1 Corinthians (or I Corinthians).

NOTE: In reading or speaking the name of the book, it is customary to say "First Corinthians," not "One Corinthians."

Special Notations

1. useful abbreviations in scripture citation

MT = Masoretic Text, the standard form of the Hebrew Old Testament

LXX = Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was most widely used by Greek-speaking Jews, or Hellenists. It is so-called because tradition has it that seventy men were involved in making the translation; *septuaginta* is the Latin word for "seventy."

TR = Textus Receptus (Received Text), the "received text" that lay behind the Authorized Version of 1611; its Greek text is sometimes called "the majority text" because the greatest number of extant New Testament manuscripts represent this text type.

2. Hebrew vs. English references in the Psalms

If you are citing the Hebrew text of the Psalms, you must remember that different versification is used in many Psalms. Those without introductory notations have the same numbering as the English (Psalm **1**, **2**, *etc.*). Others that have brief notations incorporate the introductory comment in the first verse (Psalm **11**, **14**, *etc.*). Many, however, number the introduction as verse 1, which means that the numbering is one off compared to standard English numbering (Psalm **3**, **4**, *etc.*). In a few cases the introduction is assigned two verses in the Hebrew; so the subsequent numbering is different by two (Psalm **51**, **52**, **54**). The Hebrew sometimes makes other minor adjustments relative to the English. In Psalm **18**, for example, “and he said” is part of the introduction in English Bibles, but the Hebrew text makes it part of the next verse. A format for clarifying the text intended is Psalm **3:3** MT and in parenthesis (Psalm **3:3** MT); if you are indicating both, from the English viewpoint it would be Psalm **11:2** (= **3:3** MT) and in parenthesis (Psalm **11:2** [= **3:3** MT])

3. Septuagint vs. English references in the Psalms

The Septuagint follows the Hebrew numbering by including introductory comments in verse 1 (the equivalent of Psalm **13**, **14**, *etc.*, in the Hebrew) or assigning them a separate verse (Psalm **3**, **4**, *etc.*) or two (the equivalent of Psalm **51**, **52**, **54** in the Hebrew). In addition, however, the numbering of the Psalms themselves is off by one beginning with Psalm **9**. Psalms **9** and **10** are combined so that every subsequent Psalm number is off by one. The Septuagint divides Psalm **116** and Psalm **147**, which throws the numbering off again in the other direction. There is also an added Psalm at the end, Psalm **151**, which does not appear in the standard Hebrew text. In many cases, then, both the chapter and verse designations are different from the corresponding English referencing system: “*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your lovingkindness*” (Psalm **51:1** = **50:3** LXX = **51:3** MT).

4. Septuagint vs. English references in Jeremiah

The Book of Jeremiah in the Septuagint is significantly different from the Hebrew Masoretic text both in extent and order. Citations made from it need to be correlated with English format, which is based on the Masoretic text.

5. In the Septuagint (LXX) 1 & 2 Samuel as well as 1 & 2 Kings are called 1, 2, 3 & 4 Kings [or Bas., for *Basileus*, βασιλεύς]. 1 & 2 Chronicles are called 1 & 2 Par., an abbreviation for *Paralipomenon*. Song of Solomon is called Canticles (*Canticum*, abbreviated *Cant.*). A number of other differences in titles and spellings need to be observed when making references from this version of the Old Testament.

6. 1 John **5:7** is now generally set aside as not being part of the original letter of 1 John. In subsequent translations verse 6 is divided in half to make the same number of

verses in the chapter. As a result, if you cite 1 John **5:7** from the King James Version, you need to indicate that the quotation is from the King James Version; otherwise, the reader will be confused if he reads the verse from a twentieth-century translation.

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