Writing Tips for Students

How to Write a History Essay

Most history essays are written in response to a historical question. The best way to answer that question is to use the "five paragraph" essay.

Your first paragraph (that is, your introduction) should provide some general background on the question (and may even restate the question) and then directly answer that question. This statement is your thesis. It is a good idea to add one final sentence, which will allude to the rest of your paper.

Your next three (or so) paragraphs provide a detailed, structured, and concise summary of evidence and ideas that support your thesis.

The conclusion is the place to summarize your thoughts, your essay, and your thesis. It is also the place to talk about how the past might relate to the present.

It is always a good idea to use quotations from the sources that are utilized and discussed in class.

It is always a good idea to review the Guide to Good Writing before and after you write your essay.

Basic Suggestions, Guidelines, and Grading

General Suggestions
• Start early.
• Have a friend read your early drafts.

Format
• Staple your papers.
• No coversheets.
• No plastic covers or folders.
• Always use page numbers.
• Use footnotes, endnotes, or in paragraph citation.

Style -- avoid these problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFW</td>
<td>Avoid Flavoring Words (&quot;very&quot; etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWK</td>
<td>Awkward Sentence Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLL</td>
<td>Colloquial Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>Don't Abbreviate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>Dangling Preposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUC</td>
<td>Don't Use Contractions</td>
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<tr>
<td>DUF</td>
<td>Don't Use First Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DWQ</td>
<td>Don't Write in Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>KPP</td>
<td>Keep the Past in the Past (use past tense verbs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MU</td>
<td>Meaning Unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MVT</td>
<td>Mixed Verb Tenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAS</td>
<td>Not A Sentence</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSB</td>
<td>Don't Use History as Your Personal Soap Box</td>
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<tr>
<td>PV</td>
<td>Passive Voice</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSS</td>
<td>Repetitive Sentence Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Use Standard Rules of Capitalization</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
For all documentation questions, refer to Turabian. If you do not own a copy, it is worth the price.

Here are some common formats.

**FOOTNOTES and ENDNOTES:**

*Published*


**GENERAL RULE:** NAME (FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST), TITLE, PLACE IF BOOK, VOLUME IF JOURNAL, DATE, PAGES.

*Unpublished*

3 Letter, Andrew E. Kersten to Bethany R. Kersten, 27 May 1997, Andrew E. Kersten Papers, Box 15, Folder 9, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay Archives.

**GENERAL RULE:** KIND OF DOCUMENT, TITLE, DATE, COLLECTION, LOCATION WITHIN COLLECTION, PLACE OF COLLECTION.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Same general rules above but put last names first. Always separate your primary and secondary material in your bibliography.

Questions? See me or use Turabian.

Tips:
1) Be consistent and thorough.
2) In your bibliography, separate primary and secondary sources.
3) Remember the purpose of this part of the assignment. One should be able to retrace your research steps back through your footnotes and bibliography.
UW-GREEN BAY WRITING POLICY

The faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay has adopted the following writing policy for out-of-class assignments.

Acceptable Writing:

1. Clear writing is a reflection of logical thinking; therefore, an acceptable paper must be organized. Every essay should be structured around a thesis and supported by factual evidence and arguments that are organized in a logical progression.

2. Writers must acknowledge their use of data or ideas of others; therefore, an acceptable paper must have proper documentation of all source material, following professional guidelines such as those approved by the Modern Language Association (MLA), the American Psychological Association (APA), or the American Association for the Advancement of Science, or those published in a standard style manual such as Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations.

3. An acceptable paper must reflect control of correct grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation.

4. An acceptable paper must be presented in appropriate manuscript form, with errors neatly corrected and care taken with margins, numbering of pages, spacing, and format.

Unacceptable Writing:

1. A paper without clear organization is unacceptable. Unclear organization includes illogical progressions from one idea to another and the inclusion of unnecessary ideas.

2. A paper without proper documentation is unacceptable. Failure to acknowledge the use of another writer's words or ideas constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism is both unethical and illegal. The use of professional editing for student papers is also unacceptable, as is the use of purchased papers, which is also a form of plagiarism.

3. A paper containing frequent errors in grammar, usage, spelling, or punctuation is unacceptable.

4. A paper which does not appear to be carefully done is unacceptable. This includes papers with ragged edges, typographical errors and strikeovers, illegible handwriting, stains, or smudges.

To achieve acceptable writing standards, students should purchase and use a good dictionary and a writing handbook. Assistance in improving writing skills is available through regular courses in composition and from the Writing Center, which conducts workshops and provides advice and tutoring (but not editing). All students who wish to improve their writing are encouraged to use these resources.
CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING WRITING

Listed below are some major factors that differentiate good writing from poor writing.

This list may help you identify particular aspects of your writing that need improvement. For further assistance consult with instructors who are familiar with your writing skills. Writing assistance is also available in the Writing Center (CL 109).

1. PURPOSE
   Is the purpose of your paper clear to the audience?
   Is the purpose appropriate to the assignment and to the audience?
   Is the purpose consistently maintained throughout the paper?

2. CONTENT
   Are the ideas in the paper interesting?
   Do the ideas in the paper reflect independent thought, a new approach, fresh insights?
   Is the writer actively engaged with the topic?

3. ORGANIZATION
   Are the ideas developed in a logical order?
   Is the organizational pattern clear to the readers?
   Is the discussion coherent? Are transitional devices used effectively to shift smoothly from one idea to another?

4. DEVELOPMENT
   Are the major ideas adequately supported with examples, specific details, and other kinds of evidence?
   Are the ideas presented in meaningful paragraphs?
   Is there a general sense of completeness and closure?

5. WORDS: CHOICE AND ARRANGEMENT
   Have clear, precise, and appropriate words been selected?
   Have cliches been avoided?
   Have the words been arranged into correct and graceful sentences?

6. STYLE AND TONE
   Is the style clear, lively, fluent?
   Is the tone appropriate for the purpose and audience?
   Are the sentences varied in length and structure?
   Is there appropriate use of metaphor, analogy, parallelism, and other rhetorical devices?

7. TECHNICAL QUALITIES: MECHANICS
   Does the writing conform to the conventions of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage?
   Is the format of the paper appropriate to the assignment?
   Has all material from other sources been properly documented?
   Has the paper been carefully proofread, with all typos neatly corrected?