

Helpful Intro for Writing History Papers

The Department of History has adopted these guidelines for students in the preparation of course papers and honors theses. This guide represents standards that are generally accepted in the history profession for the preparation of manuscripts. Individual professors may have their own specific requirements in addition to or in place of these guidelines. Students should consult with their professors and course syllabi for specific style requirements.

Books that historians recommend as guides to research and writing include:

Booth, Wayne, Joseph M. Williams, and Gregory G. Colomb. *The Craft of Research*. 4th edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Marius, Richard and Melvin E. Page. *A Short Guide to Writing about History*. 9th edition. New York: Pearson Education, 2015.

Strunk, William and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 4th edition. New York: Longman, 2000.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 9th edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

University of Chicago Press Staff. *The Chicago Manual of Style*. 17th edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Writing Style Requirements

- The text must be typed and double-spaced using a 10-point font with 1.5-inch margins on all sides or a 12-point font with 1-inch margins on all sides.
- End matter (endnotes and bibliography) and footnotes may be single-spaced. Assigned paper lengths generally assume something similar to Times New Roman 12-point font, which produces about 300 words per double-spaced page.
- All manuscript pages should be numbered, beginning with the first page of text.
- Attach a title page with your name, course number and title, semester, department and university names. Title page information should be double-spaced and centered horizontally and vertically.
- Indent the first line of each paragraph (an indent is usually 5 or 6 spaces)
- Do not insert extra line spaces between paragraphs except to denote sections of the manuscript.

Editorial Guidelines

- Improper spelling and poor grammar will negatively influence your grade.
- For detailed guidance on grammar and literary style see Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*, the *Chicago Manual of Style*, or Turabian *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*.

- Students should use spell-checker. However, students should remember that the use of spell-checker is not a substitute for thorough proofreading. Your spell-checker does not know that meant “there” when you wrote “their”; “her” instead of “here”; “son” instead of “sun,” etc.
- Time permitting, students are encouraged to ask a family member or friend to read over their paper. A fresh set of eyes might catch and typographical and grammatical errors which you and your spell-checker have missed.
- Students should underline or *italicize* titles of books, periodicals, and other self-contained publications in both the body of your text and in footnotes, endnotes, and bibliographies. Titles of articles must be enclosed within the quotation marks.
- Non-English words must be underlined or *italicized*.
- Students should avoid using an apostrophe with the plural of a decade to refer to years in that decade unless you mean to use the possessive form. For example, “The Civil War was fought in the 1860s,” as distinct from “Lincoln’s election was 1860’s major political event,” or “The 1860s greatest catastrophe was the Civil War.”
- Students should remember that “its” is already possessive and does not take an apostrophe. “It’s” is the contraction for “it is.”
- Students should avoid using contractions in formal writing. **Wrong:** “Contractions aren’t used in formal writing, so don’t use them.” **Correct:** “Contractions are not used in formal writing; therefore, do not use them.”
- Students may abbreviate commonly used acronyms after first fully identifying them. Example: “The United States and its European Allies established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949.” You may also abbreviate commonly used honorifics, such as “Dr.”
- Students should avoid passive voice. Students are instructed to make sure that every sentence has a verb and a subject that is performing the verb’s action. This is active voice, which is professionals and academics prefer in historical writing. Passive voice makes writing wordy and unclear. **Passive:** “Mistake were made.” **Active:** “General Joe made mistakes.”
- Historical writing requires students to be judicious with quotes. Unless the assignment requires a certain number of quotes, students should demonstrate that they can synthesize the information without directly quoting it. Block quotes can be insightful, but students too often substitute them for good writing. When using a block quote, students should not include quotation marks and center the quote five spaces from the margins on both sides.

Footnotes and Endnotes

Students should make notations in the text with a superscripted number. Example: “Quote.”¹ This number should follow all punctuation - except for a dash. Students may use either footnotes or endnotes. Students should not cite sources using embedded notes or parentheses within the text. Word processing programs create and edit the footnote/endnote numbers automatically. Whether using *Chicago Manual of Style* or

¹ Example footnote

Turabian, footnotes and endnotes have specific rules for citation. Note: students should pay specific attention when citing government documents and online sources. Refer to grammar and citation references for help.

Footnotes/Endnotes should guide the reader to sources that directly contributed to your research and the formulation of your ideas. Students use citations when quoting a source and when attributing ideas to that source. Students may also use footnotes to elaborate on a point or further analyze something that did not fit appropriately in the text.

- Examples:
 - 1. Joe Author, *The Book* (City: Publisher, Year); page number(s).
 - 2. Mary Scholar, "This Is An Article," *This Is A Periodical or Journal* 23 (Date of article publication): page number(s).
 - 3. John Writer, "Chapter from A Book," *Edited Volume*, Editor's Name, ed. (City: Publisher, 1997); page number(s).
 - 4. Fred Ideas, "An Article from the Internet," *Journal Name* 45 (Date of article publication online); page number(s); Available from Website address; online; Accessed date.
- Abbreviating Footnotes/Endnotes
 - Do not use IBID to refer to previously cited works or pages.
 - If you cite a source multiple times within your paper, the first footnote/endnote should be complete like the examples above. However, after the first full citation, the footnote/endnote can be shortened by using the author's last name, a shortened book title, and the page number being cited.
 - Example:
 - 1. Joe Author, *The Book* (City: Publisher, Year); page number(s).
 - Author, *Book*, page number(s).

Bibliography Entries

Students should list all entries in alphabetical order by the author's last name. If an entry is more than one line, the second line is indented. If more than one line, individual entries should be single spaced. If there is more than one author, alphabetize by the first author's last name. Double space between entries.

- Examples:
 - Author, Joe. *The Book*. City: Publisher, Year.
 - Scholar, Mary. "This Is an Article." *This Is A Periodical or Journal* 23 (date of article publication); page number(s).
 - Writer John, "Chapter from A Book." In *Edited Volume*, Editor's Name, ed. Page Number(s). City: Publisher, Year.
 - Ideas, Frederick. "An Article from the Internet," *Journal Name* 45 (Date of article publication online); page number(s); Available from Website address; online; Accessed date.

Online Research and Resources

- American Historical Association
 - <http://www.historians.org/>

- Organization of American Historians
 - www.oah.org
- H-Net (History Discussion Lists)
 - www.h-net.org
- National Council on Public History
 - www.ncph.org
- American Association for State and Local History
 - www.aaslh.org
- National Parks Service
 - www.cr.nps.gov
- The Library of Congress
 - www.loc.gov/homepage/lchp.html
- The Smithsonian Institution
 - www.si.edu