

Style Sheet for History Papers

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Appearance Guidelines:

1. You must use one inch margins all around. Do not use larger margins. Exaggerated margins give papers an awkward appearance. More importantly they do not compensate for brief or incomplete ideas.
2. Do not use a font larger than 12 point. If you are unable to meet the minimum length do not resort to using size 14, 16 or larger fonts. Large fonts give papers a comical appearance.
3. Make sure you double-space your paper. Single and 1.5 spacing give a crowded appearance.
4. Number your pages. You need only put your name and class time on the first page.

Form Guidelines:

1. A paragraph consists of a topic sentence (the mini-thesis of the paragraph) and at least three other sentences. Topic sentences should link the paragraph back to the main thesis of the paper or explore a sub-theme of your main argument. Tab or indent five spaces at the beginning of each paragraph.
2. Proofread your work with care. Spelling errors will weaken your grade significantly. Do not rely on spell checkers, they are of limited value. Spell checkers cannot distinguish between homonyms like "wood" and "would."
3. Avoid using contractions. Instead of writing "don't" and "won't" write out the words so that they read "do not" and "will not."
4. You are also responsible for grammatical errors. Poor grammar weakens your message. Some common errors are subject-verb agreement, incorrect use of irregular verbs, and run-on sentences. You can find more information on this topic on the common errors page.
5. Avoid first and second person ("I, "you") and stay in third person voice.
6. Stay in the past tense when discussing historical events.
7. Write in the active and not passive voice. Instead of overusing "is," "are," and "were" try to write in a different manner. "He was always trying to find gold and he went to new areas where he could find it" versus "Constantly searching for gold, he traveled to new areas to find the precious mineral."
8. Avoid slang and profanity in your papers. Instead of writing, "he got stiffed by his posse" try something along the lines of "his friends abandoned him." Unless you are quoting directly profanity does nothing else but turn off the reader.

Style Guidelines:

1. Use clear and precise sentences for your thesis statement and the beginning of each paragraph. This will make it easier for your reader to follow your ideas.
2. Avoid long quotes. Instead of using lengthy quotations incorporate sentence length quotations into the text of your essay. The latter method will facilitate analysis. If you must give longer quotations, remember to indent them and provide an explanation of their relevance to your argument before and after the selection. Make sure you correctly cite the author of the quotes. Read the citation guidelines.
3. If you decide to use outside sources you must cite them using accepted footnote models.
4. Do not plagiarize the work of others. For further details on what constitutes plagiarism see the page devoted to academic policies and click on "plagiarism defined."
5. Prepare a detailed outline. Instead of relying solely on your memory use an outline. Outlines make it easier to organize your ideas.