

History Style Sheet*

Updated 1/14

Every discipline has different expectations for writing. This style sheet serves as a brief outline of the standards for history. Bear in mind, however, that individual faculty members may have amendments to these standards for specific assignments. Consult your instructor for more information.

1. **Thesis:** Papers must have a clear thesis and sufficient evidence in the body of the paper to support it. As Hellstern et al. argue: “the introduction of your paper [must] contain a sentence that expresses the task you intend to accomplish. This thesis sentence communicates your main idea - the one you are going to prove, defend or illustrate.”¹

2. **Conclusion:** The conclusion represents your last opportunity to convince the reader of the validity of your thesis. Your conclusion should therefore reaffirm your thesis and emphasize the main points of the paper that support your argument. Do not introduce new ideas in the conclusion or introduce material not covered in previous paragraphs.

3. **Grammar and style:** Colloquial expressions, contractions (i.e. “could’ve” in place of “could have”), use of the first person (i.e. the use of “I”) and the use of *etc.* are forbidden. Similarly, you should not generally begin sentences with prepositions or conjunctions. Hence, instead of “Also, John bought eggs,” you should write “John also bought eggs.” Furthermore, there is a difference between *there*, *their* and *they’re*. Learn to use them correctly. The same is true of *your*, *yore*, *you’re*, *affect*, *effect*, *its* and *it’s*. Finally, colloquial (i.e. informal) expressions have no place in writing assignments at the college level, hence slang, jargon and expressions like “this book sucked” should be avoided.

Papers should contain smooth transitions between ideas, proper paragraph and sentence composition, and little if any of the passive voice. As you write your papers the transition between ideas, particularly between paragraphs, should be as seamless as possible. For example, the statements that “Paul Revere is well known as a silversmith” and “He rode through the New England countryside to warn the militia of the arrival of British troops” are totally unrelated to one another as written. Some form of connection must be made between them along the lines of “Paul Revere is not only known as a silversmith, but also for riding through the New England countryside to warn the militia of the arrival of British troops.” In addition to smooth transitions between ideas, proper sentence and paragraph structure are crucial to the smooth flow of your papers. To this end, one word sentences and one sentence paragraphs are forbidden. They serve only to break up the flow of your text and cannot possibly do justice to the ideas that you are

*This revised version of Kenneth Orosz et al, “UMF History Style Sheet,” Department of Social Sciences and Business, University of Maine at Farmington is used by permission.

¹Mark Hellstern et al. *The History Student Writer's Manual* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1998), 21.

trying to convey. Conversely, avoid overly long paragraphs; ideally paragraphs should not exceed more than two thirds of a page. Finally, in the interests of maintaining reader interest you should avoid use of the passive voice (i.e. a sentence in which the subject is receiving the action of the verb rather than doing it). Thus, a passive sentence like “The boy was bitten by the dog” should be rewritten as an active sentence like “The dog bit the boy.”

Finally, at this point in your academic careers faculty assume that you know the basic rules of grammar and expect you to abide by them. If you are at all unclear what these rules are you should consult a grammar manual like William Strunk and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 2000). At a minimum you should avoid sentence fragments (i.e. every sentence must have a verb), your verbs should agree with their subjects, your verb tenses should remain consistent, you should use proper punctuation, and you should spell words correctly. Do not rely exclusively on your computer’s spell checker as it will not catch all typos.

4. Appearance of texts: All papers must be typed, double spaced and stapled. Do not tinker with the line spacing, fonts, margins or make use of the “make it fit” function on your computer. Standard margins are 1 inch on all sides. Standard font is 12 point. Hence, a standard typewritten page contains approximately 300 words of text (excluding footnotes) regardless of the font used.

5. Quotations: Quotations should only be used to support your point, not make it for you. Hence, quotes need to be introduced and explained, not simply inserted in a paper. Furthermore, quotes should be inside quotation marks. Failure to use quotation marks, even if the material is otherwise cited properly, is a form of plagiarism. The only exceptions to this rule are long quotes (over 3 lines) which do not require quotation marks; instead they must be single spaced and be indented on both sides (i.e. “hanging indented”).

Quotations can and occasionally should be adjusted to fit your own text or to clarify the quotation. Anytime that you add material of your own in the midst of a quote (i.e. an appropriate article, clause, conjunction or preposition) you must insert the added material in square brackets (i.e. []). If you omit portions of a quotation then you must indicate to your readers that you have done so by using ellipses (...) wherever text has been omitted.

6. Placement of notes in text: The purpose of notes is to allow the reader to gather more information or check the veracity of your sources, hence it is crucial that materials be properly cited and that the notes occur in the right place in your text. For this reason, gang footnoting at the end of a paragraph is unacceptable since it is unclear exactly which sections of your text draw on which sources. Instead, any source materials should be cited at the end of the first sentence in which they appear. Unless otherwise informed, your reader will assume that subsequent sentences in the same paragraph draw upon the same note. For example, in the following passage the reader assumes that the material in

the second, third and fourth sentences comes from the same source indicated in footnote number 1.

After their attempt to poison him with arsenic failed, Rasputin's assassins panicked and turned to more violent means.¹ Setting aside the poisoned wine, Prince Yussapov and his henchmen stabbed Rasputin repeatedly, beat him with sticks and their fists and then finally shot him with their pistols. Despite their best efforts, however, Rasputin refused to die.

If you have a single sentence that draws upon multiple sources there is no need to use a separate footnote for each reference. For example, in the following sentence the full citations for each author would all be included in the same footnote separated by a semicolon:

Germany's rationale for seizing colonies in the mid 1880s has been the subject of ongoing historical debate, most notably among A. J. P. Taylor, Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Mary Townsend, Woodruff Smith and P.M. Kennedy.¹

7. Format for notes: Citations should be limited to either footnotes or endnotes. Parenthetical citations are expressly forbidden. All direct quotes, paraphrased material, or specific information that is not common knowledge must be cited. Simply re-writing a passage in your own words is not sufficient to avoid charges of plagiarism; you must acknowledge the source from which you got the idea/information. In addition to indicating the source of your information, notes may also be used to explain or expand upon points made in your text.

Citations for historical writing conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style* format; a condensed and more accessible version of the *Manual* is popularly referred to as Turabian.² Proper footnotes for books always include author, title, city, publisher, date, and page numbers. Subsequent notes can be abbreviated, but must always include author, brief title and page number. For internet sources you must also include the URL address and access date. For more information about specific formats see Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers* 8th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). The following are some of the more common formats for footnotes.

Examples of full citations

For a book with one author

Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 8th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 123.

²University of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); and Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

For a work by up to 3 authors:

John A. Goldsmith, John Komlos, and Penny Schine Gold, *The Chicago Guide to Your Academic Career*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 317-23.

For a work by more than 3 authors:

Lynn Hunt et al., *The Making of the West*, 2 vols. (Boston: Bedford/St Martin's, 2003).

For an article in a book:

Dane Kennedy, "Imperial History and Post-Colonial Theory," in *The Decolonization Reader*, ed. James D. Le Sueur (New York: Routledge, 2003), 10-22

For an article in a journal:

Roy Rosenzweig, "Security or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era," *American Historical Review* 108, no. 3 (June 2003): 735-62.

For a website

Arthur Young, "Travels in France," Hannover Historical Texts Project, accessed August 20, 2008, <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/young.html>.

Abbreviated citations

Ibid is used to refer to an item cited in a previous footnote without intervening references. If you are referring to the exact same page, simply use Ibid. If you are referring to a different page in the same work, use Ibid and the page number. Hence, repeated references to Turabian without intervening citations would appear as follows:

¹Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 6th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 123.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 135.

All other subsequent references must provide the author's last name, a short version of the title and the page number(s). Hence, subsequent references to any of the examples cited above will appear as follows:

⁴Roy Rosenzweig, "Security or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era," *American Historical Review* 108, no. 3 (June 2003): 735-62.

⁵John A. Goldsmith, John Komlos, and Penny Schine Gold, *The Chicago Guide to Your Academic Career*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 317-23.

⁵Turabian, *Manual for Writers*, 130-35.

⁶Ibid., 159.

⁷Goldsmith, Komlos and Gold, *Chicago Guide*, 12.

⁸Rosenzweig, "Security or Abundance," 755.

All instructors are committed to improving student writing. If any of these standards are unclear please see your instructor.