

Stylesheet for History Papers

(Reproduced, with minor adaptations, from Paul Halsall's *Stylesheet for Humanities Papers* developed at Fordham University)

Introduction

Paper writing has its own conventions. It is as well to learn these now as to need to correct bad habits later. The style I recommend is that outlined in Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). You can also employ the online styleguides located in the Vaughan Library at <http://libguides.acadiau.ca/content.php?pid=1254&sid=3373545>

I Typing and Presentation

Papers must be presented, double-spaced, on standard 8 1/2"x 11" paper. Use 1 inch margins all round. Use 10 or 12 pt. type. **Staple the paper in the top left-hand corner.** Do not use plastic covers or binders. Keep a copy other than the one you submit (professors' cars have been stolen before now).

Text should be double spaced (unlike in this handout). Long quotations, however, should be single spaced and indented five spaces. There is always at least one space after a period.

The paper should be written in paragraphs. The first line of each paragraph should be indented five spaces (one standard tab). Sub-headings (as in this handout) may be used, but are not considered good style by many. There is no gap between paragraphs.

II Title Page

The following information should be included on the title (front) page of all papers.

- Your name
- The course name and number
- The lecturer's name (if you're in HIST 1413 or 1423, then it'd likely be me, David Duke)
- The date the paper was due
- The title of the paper
- Any epithets you want to use
- Nothing else

III The Text

Good grammar is expected of all students. If you have worries about your writing abilities, then you should certainly consider a session at the university's Writing Centre. This excellent resource is universally recognised by students as being of enormous help in the process of writing essays (and therefore helping to generate higher grades). Those new to writing papers should pay special attention to the following, lack of attention to which represents 90% of grammatical and stylistic errors seen in student papers:-

i) Spelling

Spelling should follow the generally accepted conventions. If you don't have one, buy a good dictionary. **Do not use spellcheck as your editor here!**

ii) Correct Use of Tenses

In general refer to actions people did in the past in the **past** tense (examples: "Napoleon won the Battle of Austerlitz", and "Voltaire wrote *Candide*"). Refer to quotations from authors in the **present** tense, even if the author you are referring to is a historical person (examples: "E.P. Thompson [*a modern writer*] says that the English working class evolved only in the 19th century," and also "Voltaire [*an 18th Century author*] suggests the Church of his time was corrupt.") In the last case note that you use the **present** tense for what Voltaire says/writes/suggests but the **past** tense for his description of a state of affairs in the past.

iii) Use of Apostrophes

Apostrophes are not used in the plurals of words (example: "telephones." not "telephone's.") Apostrophes *are* used to indicate possession of one thing by another (example "the man's hat.") If the word that possesses is already plural the apostrophe goes after the "s" that was added to make the word plural (for instance, "The Students' Association" means the association belonging to many students, but "the student's association" would mean some association pertaining to one particular student.)

iv) Its and It's

"Its" = indication of possession, like "his" or "her."

e.g. "the book's cover" = "its cover."

"It's" = contraction for "it is."

iv) (a) **Lead and Led**

"Lead", in noun form = soft, heavy metal used by Romans. In Latin it was known as *Plumbum* (whence we get the term "plumbing"); chemical symbol Pb. It is **NOT** and never is the past participle of the verb "to lead".

"Led" = past participle of the verb "to lead".

Thus, "My inability to use this construction correctly **lead** to my prof. tearing out what little remained of his hair" is grammatically incorrect (but factually accurate), whereas

"My inability to use this construction correctly **led** to my prof. tearing out what little remained of his hair" is grammatically correct.

v) **Capitalization**

Capitalize:

1. The first word in a sentence.
2. Proper nouns (i.e. names).
3. Words such as "King," "President," only when referring to a particular person.
4. Words in titles, but not non-initial conjunctions, prepositions, or articles.

vi) **Conditional Verbs I**

"He would have been elected," not "He would of been elected."

"She could have done it," not "She could of done it."

vii) **Conditional Verbs II**

It has been very common to use phrases such as "*If he would have helped her, she would now be safe,*" but this is grammatical nonsense and does not do what it intends, which is to make a conditional statement about the past. Literally the phrase as it stands means "*If he had wanted to help her, she would now be safe.*" The phrase should be "*If he had helped her, she would now be safe.*"

viii Split Infinitives

It is probably a lost cause to argue against them, but too many split infinitives are a sign of an uneducated writer. The infinitive of a verb is that part which expresses the meaning alone, for example, "to go," "to sing," "to be." In English, the infinitive is marked by the word "to," but in most other languages the infinitive is just one word, for instance *aller, penser* (French), *gehen, kaufen* (German), *cantar, amar* (Spanish). For this reason, it has long been considered bad style in English to "split infinitives" with adverbs. Instead of writing "to quickly go," or "to finally sing," you should write "to go quickly," or "finally to sing."

ix) Use of First Person Pronouns

When writing formal papers only use "I" and "me" when it becomes confusing to avoid them. A term paper is not meant to "sound" like a letter to a friend or a diary entry.

x) "Feel" and "Believe"

These words are massively overused by students. Your feelings are not relevant to a paper, it's your *thoughts* that count. When writing about historical figures, you only know what they "felt" if they left diaries or told someone else their feelings. Unless you can cite such information, do not state that a historical figure "felt" something. Also do not use "felt" when you mean "thought." These comments apply to "believe" in a less stringent manner.

xi) "Being that"

"Being that he was King of France," is better rendered "*Since* he was...," or "*Because* he was...," or "*When* he was..."

xii) Words to Avoid

"Incredible," "Unbelievable," "Literally," "People," "They."
Always check that these words really mean something when you use them.

xiii) Passive Constructions

It is bad style to use passive constructions, or more concretely, passive constructions lead to bad style.

Here are some examples:-

"The King was lynched."
"The White House had been burned down."
"America was discovered."

All these sentences would be stronger and more informative if the person doing the lynching/burning/discovering was put in the picture.

"The Parisian mob lynched the King."
"The British burned down the White House."
"Columbus (never knew he) discovered America."

IV Citations and Notes

You must indicate from where you are making any quotations you use in your paper. It is also important to cite the source of arguments and ideas when you take them from a textbook or other author. The way to do this is in footnotes (at the bottom of the page) or endnotes (at the end of the paper). Whichever wordprocessing package you're using (Open Office, MS Word, Appleworks, etc.) you will have the option when working with notes to insert them either as footnotes or endnotes. **It does not matter which you choose** - the only important thing to remember is to **be consistent in your choice**. That is, if you select endnotes, stick with endnotes throughout your paper; if you choose footnotes at the bottom of the page, then stick to that throughout the paper.

Avoid quotations and paraphrases of the modern authors you consult. Sources from the period you are writing about may be quoted, but do this sparingly. It is YOUR words and thoughts that are required, and on which you will be graded.

Some current interpretations of *Chicago Manual of Style / Turabian Style* allow for in-text parenthetical referencing (Duke, 2009), like that. This has led to all kinds of confusion amongst students. The relaxation allowing in-text parenthetical referencing is universally agreed to be restricted to **papers in the social sciences** (such as Sociology, Political Science, and so on). Humanities disciplines that require *Chicago / Turabian* style still require, almost universally, the employment of footnotes or endnotes; parenthetical referencing is **not** acceptable in these cases.

Notes should be indicated in the text by superscripted numbers, like this.¹ Note that the number **always follows punctuation** - in other words, it's always going to be the last thing in the sentence, even after the period mark. Notes should be numbered consecutively from the beginning to the end of the paper rather than being separately numbered on each page. Even though the text of your paper is double-spaced, footnotes should be single spaced. Leave a line between each footnote. The first line of a footnote should be indented five spaces. If you're

using MS Word, etc., this should be handled by the elves in the programme -- but check to be sure.

The first mention of a source in the footnote or endnote should contain the following information in the order given here:-

BOOK:- i) Name of author(s) ii) Title of book (underlined or italicized, not both) iii) The edition used (not necessary for first edition) vi) City of publication v) Publisher vi) Year of publication vii) page references.

JOURNAL ARTICLE:- i) Name of author(s) ii) "Title of Article" (in quotation marks) iii) Name of journal (underlined or italicized, not both) vi) Number of Journal v) Year of publication (in parentheses) vi) page references.

ARTICLE IN A COLLECTION:- i) Name of author(s) of article ii) "Title of article" (in quotation marks) iii) the word "in" iv) Title of collection (underlined or italicized, not both) v) The edition used (not necessary for first edition) vi) Name of editor(s) of collection vii) City of publication viii) Publisher ix) Year of publication x) page references.

Here is an example for a book (with a single author):-

¹ Alfred Cobban, A History of Modern France Vol I :1715-1799, 3rd ed. (Baltimore: Pelican, 1963), 18.

A textbook with multiple authors would be :-

² John B. Harrison, Richard E. Sullivan, and Dennis Sherman, A Short History of Western Civilization, Volume II, Since 1600, 7th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990), 18.

An article from a journal would be :-

³ William Monter, "The Historiography of European Witchcraft," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 9 (1978), 450.

An article from a collection would be :-

⁴ William Monter, "Protestant Wives, Catholic Saints, and the Devil's Handmaid: Women in the Age of Reformations," in Becoming Visible: Women in European History, ed. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, 2d ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 206.

An article from an online source such as a website would be :-

⁵ P.G.M. Thomas, "The Role of Ned Ludd in England's Industrialisation," History Today 56:12 (December 1996) [journal on-line] available from <http://www.york.ac.uk/libraries/articles.html>; Internet; accessed 17 November 2000.

Note especially the use of punctuation in these references. Note also that the place of publication is always a city, never a state or country. If the place of publication is not one of the major publishing centers [i.e., New York, London, Boston, Paris, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago], indicate the city and the state. Finally with publishers' names do not include words such as "Limited," "Inc." or "Publishing Company."

Later references to the same author can just give his or her last name and the page number. Do not use "p" or "pg".: for example:-

⁵ Cobban, 26.

⁶ Monter, ??.

As indicated above, the alternative system of citation is the **parenthetical references system** used in some fields of academic study. It is not used in history, but you may wish to investigate it for other classes.

V Bibliography

For a university paper your bibliography or works cited list should list all the books and articles you have consulted in writing your paper. It should contain the same information as your first citation in a footnote but in a slightly different order. For example:-

Bridenthal, Renate and Claudia Koonz, eds. Becoming Visible: Women in European History. 2d ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

Cobban, Alfred. A History of Modern France Vol I:1715-1799. 3d ed. Baltimore: Pelican, 1963

Harrison, John B., Richard E. Sullivan, and Dennis Sherman. A Short History of Western Civilization, Volume II, Since 1600. 7th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990.

Monter, William, "The Historiography of European Witchcraft." Journal of Interdisciplinary History 9 (1978): 435-51

Monter, William, "Protestant Wives, Catholic Saints, and the Devil's Handmaid: Women in the Age of Reformations." In Becoming Visible: Women in European History, ed. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, , 2d ed., 201-19. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

Thomas, P.G.M. "The Role of Ned Ludd in England's Industrialisation," History Today 56:12 (December 1996) [journal on-line] available from <http://www.york.ac.uk/libraries/articles.html>; Internet; accessed 17 November 2000.

In a list of books the last name of the author goes first. The books are listed alphabetically in order of the authors' last names. Books without an author are listed by the first word, excluding "the" and "a" in the title: Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary would go under "W". It looks better if you indent from the second line of each entry (a hanging indent).

The following advice appeared in the paper at Fordham University in the Fall'88 Semester. Needless to say it is meant to be humorous.

HOW TO WRITE GOOD

My several years in the word game have learnt me several rules.

1. Avoid Alliteration. Always.
2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
3. Avoid cliches like the plague. (They're old hat.)
4. Employ the vernacular.
5. Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.
6. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are unnecessary.
7. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
8. Contractions aren't necessary.
9. Foreign words and phrases are not apropos.
10. One should never generalize.
11. Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said: "I hate quotations. Tell me what you know."
12. Comparisons are as bad as cliches.
13. Don't be redundant; don't use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
14. Profanity sucks.
15. Be more or less specific.
16. Understatement is always best.
17. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.

Lastly, the following is why you most definitely should not rely upon a spell-checker as your editor. Your brain remains superior to that of a computer -- for now.

Eye halve a spelling chequer
It came with my pea sea
It plainly marques four my revue
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.

Eye strike a key and type a word
And weight four it two say
Weather eye am wrong oar write
It shows me strait a weigh.

As soon as a mist ache is maid
It nose bee fore two long
And eye can put the error rite
Its rare lea ever wrong.

Eye have run this poem threw it
I am shore your pleased two no
Its letter perfect awl the weigh
My chequer tolled me sew.
