

STYLE GUIDE

Writing is communication, and the first step to writing a good paper is to organize your thoughts. The introduction is the most important part of the paper, since that is where you introduce your thesis and first engage the reader. You should also think carefully about the structure of the entire paper, and present your main points in a logical sequence (eg, in chronological order or following the structure of your primary source). Most history papers also follow certain conventions, which are listed below:

FOLLOW A LOGICAL STRUCTURE:

- * State your argument (thesis) early in the paper, probably in the first or second paragraph.
- * Organize your paragraphs so that each paragraph is built around one major idea
- * Use topic sentences to state the paragraph's main idea and move your overall argument forward.
- * Use the first and/or last sentence(s) of paragraphs for transitions. Good transition sentences are like a road map: they tell your readers where they have been and where they're heading now.
- * The conclusion should not simply summarize what you have already said, but clarify its significance. Avoid introducing new ideas or information in the conclusion.

WRITE CLEARLY AND WELL

- * Use precise language: avoid generalizations and, where necessary, define your terms.
- * Use tenses correctly, eg: Harriet Jacobs *describes* her escape from slavery, but Jacobs *escaped* from slavery.
- * Use gender-neutral language (plurals come in handy here!).
- * Use modern terms (eg African American, not Negro), even if your sources do not -- or explain your decision to use older, possibly offensive terms (eg, feeble-minded) in a footnote or endnote.
- * Write in the active voice: "The professor assigned a paper," not "A paper was assigned by the professor."
- * Avoid run-on sentences. Overly long sentences can usually be split into two or more sentences.
- * Avoid dangling clauses. Make sure that a subordinate clause refers to the word or words immediately preceding or following them. For example, write: "Students taking this course, which meets on Wednesdays, can write well," instead of "This course's students, which meets on Wednesdays, can write well."

USE QUOTATIONS WISELY

- * Quotations should contain the *exact* words found in the original.
- * Quotations should be used sparingly; for the most part, they should *illustrate* your point, not make it for you.

- * Quotations of fewer than four lines should remain in the text and be enclosed in quotation marks. "The quotation marks come after the period."
- * Quotations of four lines or more should be set off from the main text and indented.
- * All quotations should be properly cited.

FOLLOW A CONSISTENT METHOD OF CITATION

Historians usually use endnotes or footnotes following the Chicago Manual of Style. Most of the assigned reading for the course follows this style, and you can use their notes as a guide. In general, notes should come at the end of a sentence or paragraph, even if the quotation is in the middle of a sentence.

The first time you refer to a book, list the full bibliographical information (including the author's first name. Subsequent references need only the author's name or a shortened version of the title.

** a book:

1. Molly Ladd-Taylor, Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare and the State, 1890-1930 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 5-6.

** an article in a book or anthology:

2. Bettina Bradbury, "The Fragmented Family: Family Strategies in the Face of Death, Illness, and Poverty, Montreal, 1860-1885," in Childhood and Family in Canadian History, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 109-128.

** an article from a scholarly or popular journal:

3. Christine Stansell, "Women, Children, and the Uses of the Streets: Class and Gender Conflict in New York City, 1850-1860," Feminist Studies 8 (Summer 1982): 309-335.

** a document from a larger collection:

4. James W.C. Pennington, "The Fugitive Blacksmith (1849)," in I Was Born a Slave: An Anthology of Classic Slave Narratives, ed. Yuval Taylor (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 114-119.

** a document without an author from a larger collection:

4. "'Proposed Reforms in New York Poor Law, 1857,'" in Children and Youth in America: A Documentary History, vol. 1, ed. Robert H. Bremner et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 647-650.

** a newspaper or magazine article without an author:

5. "'Moms' Denounced as Peril to Nation," New York Times, April 28, 1945: 11.

** an internet source (make sure you include the URL):

6. Steve Selden, "Eugenics Popularization," Image Archive of the American Eugenics Movement (<http://www.eugenicsarchive.org/eugenics/>).

For subsequent references to the same source, use "Ibid." if the source was cited in the previous note. Otherwise, use the author's surname or a shortened version of the title, eg. Ladd-Taylor, 5-6 OR "NSC 68."