Doing History
L. M. Stallbaumer-Beishline

David Pace and a group of historians at Indiana University, in consultation with a faculty developer (Joan Middendorf), created The History Learning Project. They identified challenges faced while teaching history and explored how to confront those challenges to improve their students’ learning experiences. Naturally, they depend upon students to do their homework (read assignments, write, take time to ponder), but what they also realized is that they assumed that students knew what it meant to do history, to think or read like a historian at the college-level. So the sections below explain:

• Reading and thinking like a Historian – Why bother?
• How to read history?
• How do historians determine significance?
• Historical thinking is messy and can be dangerous!
• What makes some historical interpretations more plausible than others?
• Stylistic conventions in writing history papers
• Top ten tips to edit your paper

Reading and thinking like a Historian – why bother?

When we read like a historian, our reading goals are determined by questions that triggered our interests or that develop as we learn more about the topic. When we read like a historian, we locate the claims and sub-claims (a.k.a. thesis/sub-thesis) within paragraphs, sections, chapters, and books. When we read like a historian, we make distinctions between the claims and the evidence used to support them. The evidence most frequently are documents from the past (letters, diaries, government records, paintings artifacts, etc. a.k.a. primary sources) housed in digital or brick-and-mortar archives. Evidence can take other forms including the facts of the event (e.g. sequence of events, knowledge of defining features, etc) or other historians’ interpretations when we lack the time or resources to go to the archives. When we read like a historian, we separate the minor and major details and commit to memory the major facts that will help us answer the questions that triggered our inquiry.¹ The more familiar the topic, the easier it becomes to read with discernment, to know what evidence is essential, and to recall the details.

In teaching history, I prefer to explore the past through the documentary evidence, rather than ask students to read a textbook. But as David Pace and his colleagues indicated,

The bottlenecks of using evidence exist because students usually come into history classes from their high school training ill-prepared to think like historians: they see themselves as performers of existing stories or, worse, as repeaters of ‘facts.’ In beginning students’ eyes, what makes someone a good history student is the ability to know all the relevant details of the past. They do not see themselves as ‘attorneys’ who must find both the evidence and the arguments to defend their clients

¹ David Pace, “Decoding the Reading of History: An Example of the Process,” in New Directions for Teaching and Learning 98 (Summer 2004): 14-15.
in a convincing way. That history is constructed from and based in evidence is something they have to learn.²

Facts are important, indeed essential, to historical investigation, but they create a foundation or are part of the journey, not the destination. Consider what Kathryn and Luther Spoehr noted,

History is about facts in much the same way that reading is about the alphabet: facts (and letters) are essential building blocks; without them you cannot do history (or read). But just as reading necessitates looking at how the letters and words stand in relation to one another (so that you can see the difference between a horse chestnut and a chestnut horse), thinking historically requires going beyond chronology or chronicles and looking at the relations that the facts bear to one another.³

In other words, facts are building blocks or paving stones. Yet historical facts are easily forgettable if we do not have significant reasons for remembering them.

So my challenge is to help you read and think like a historian because this is a lifelong learning skill. What do I mean by lifelong learning? It is the desire to be a voluntary, self-motivated learner, who does not have to depend upon a formal educational setting, but is willing to learn informally. In this age of high-tech computers and readily accessible reliable knowledge and fake news, we must be able to acquire knowledge, but also think critically about we have discovered. So you need to evaluate the reliability of information, read and arrive at an independent opinion, and when necessary support your claims convincingly whether in dialogue or in writing. During the course of this semester, you will be asked to engage in these learning behaviors. We will strike a balance between acquiring sufficient factual knowledge and creating many opportunities to ponder larger questions that will deepen your understanding of major developments in the history of Western Civilization. Developing the skill set can make you a better citizen.

Consider the chart below that outlines questions that drive historians’ thinking and reading about the past.⁴

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause and Effect</th>
<th>Change and Continuity</th>
<th>Turning Points</th>
<th>Using the Past</th>
<th>Through their Eyes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What were the causes of past events?</td>
<td>What has changed?</td>
<td>How did past decisions or actions affect future choices?</td>
<td>How does the past help us make sense of the present?</td>
<td>How did people in the past view their world?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the effects?</td>
<td>What has remained the same?</td>
<td>• How did decisions or actions narrow or eliminated choices for people?</td>
<td>• How is the past similar to the present?</td>
<td>• How did their worldview affect their choices and actions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who or what made change happen?</td>
<td>• Who has benefited from this change? And why?</td>
<td>• How did decisions or actions affect people?</td>
<td>• How is the past different from the present?</td>
<td>• What values, skills, and forms of knowledge did people need to succeed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who supported change?</td>
<td>• Who has not benefited? And why?</td>
<td>• How did decisions or actions affect people?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² Valerie Grim, David Pace, and Leah Shopkow, “Learning to use Evidence in the Study of History,” in New Directions for Teaching and Learning 98 (Summer 2004): 63-64.
⁴ Nikki Mandell and Bobbie Malone, Thinking Like a Historian: Rethinking History Instruction: A Framework to Enhance and Improve Teaching and Learning (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2007), 10-12, 16-22.
• Who did not support change?
• Which effects were intended?
• Which effects were accidental?
• How did events affect people’s lives, community, and the world?

| actions significantly transform people’s lives? | • What can we learn from the past? |

## How to read History?

When reading history (or any topic for that matter), always remember this fundamental rule:

> “...knowing how to read something results almost automatically from knowing why we are reading, and without some purpose, reading is an aimless activity.” ~ Katherine Gottschalk and Keith Hjortshoj

When reading evidence from the past, whether it is visual or written, you must remember the above fundamental rule, and then read to understand text, context, and subtext:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>What is visible/readable, i.e. what information is provided by the source?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>What was going on during the time period (timelines are a useful tool)? What background information do you have that helps explain the information found in the source (consult the introduction to the document or the topic)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Subtext | What is between the lines? Ask questions about the following:  
  • Author: Who created the source, and what do we know about that person?  
  • Audience: for whom was the source created?  
  • Reason: Why was this source produced when it was?  
  Remember: even if we have public access to the source, does not mean that anyone or everyone had access at the time. |

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This is a variation of the journalist questions: who, what, when, where, why, and how.

After reading individual documents for text, context, and subtext, your reading is not finished. You have opened windows into the past with individual documents, but what are the connections between documents? Which ones are more or less reliable to help you answer the questions being explored or developed? What overall interpretation will you offer of the evidence given the questions? Knowing the questions for which we seek answers will also aid you in determining significance of isolated events, people, and ideas, and significance of past eras as well.

**How do historians determine significance?**

"...in trying to make sense of history, 'one cannot escape from the idea of significance. History, to be meaningful, depends on selection and this, in turn, depends on establishing criteria of significance to select the more relevant and to dismiss the less relevant.'" ~ Tim Lomas

What a historian views as significant is inherently manifest in topic selection. Stéphane Lévesque, who researches how Canadian history is taught writes, "Historical significance is thus a quality determined by historians (or other investigators) in response to the past. An event, to paraphrase [Peter] Seixas, becomes significant when contemporary people see its relevance to other events and ultimately to the present." Until the mid-twentieth century, most professional historians were interested in war, political history, and the history of great men. Subsequently, their stories dominated the pages of history textbooks and monographs. During the 1950s and 1960s, historical studies became more diversified making room for an ever widening range of topics: feminist-women-gender Histories; Black Studies and African-American History; Latino Studies and Hispanic History; Popular Culture History; History of Memory; History of Everyday Life; Psycho-History; Sports History; Media History; and the list goes on.

For students who have learned history in grades K-12; you may have the impression that history is a series of facts to be memorized. Textbooks encourage this belief presenting a story clearly organized around chronological or thematic narratives that leave the impression that every event of the past was significant. But is every event significant? What choices do historians make when writing specialized studies of the past, and not massive textbooks that suck the life right out of us as we read! During the course of the semester, you may be asked to take a stand about what events or eras you think are significant. Here are some criteria to consider.

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8 Stéphane Lévesque, *Thinking Historically: Educating Students for the Twenty-First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 44.
No Scientific Rule

As Stéphane Lévesque notes, there are no scientific rules about what makes something significant, but several factors shape historians’ choices.⁹

1. Importance
   a. Was it important to those who lived it?
   b. Did it influence their behaviors?

2. Profundity
   a. How deeply were people affected?

3. Quantity
   a. How many people were affected?
   b. Be careful not to allow the need for large numbers to shape analysis

4. Durability
   a. Should an event last a long time to be significant? What would that length of time be?
   b. How does one determine durability if the beginning and end are unclear?
   c. How does the before and after picture compare?
   d. Be careful not to assume that only long-lasting events be significant.

5. Relevance
   a. Did the event have to be relevant to contemporaries?
   b. Does the event have to be relevant to the historian?
   c. Does the event have to be relevant to present-day developments?
   d. Be careful to avoid presentism; what is relevant changes with time and each person.

Additional (More Troubling) Factors?

In judging relevance, we must acknowledge that “where we stand determines what we see.” However, we must also abide by the standards of the historical profession. Stéphane Lévesque elaborates and suggests three additional factors that might shape how we determine significance.¹⁰ These pose more challenges to meeting the standards of history (see American Historical Association Statement of Standards). If, for example, we are driven by intimate interests, symbolic significance, or to provide contemporary lessons, do we risk misinterpreting the past.

1. Intimate Interests
   a. Is the event more personal or intimately of interest, e.g. family history, ancestry?
   b. Be careful, because our personal investment may lead us to dismiss what is relevant if it does not jibe with personal interests.

2. Symbolic significance
   a. “Is the event emblematically important? Does it represent something significant in the collective consciousness?”
   b. Be careful, because this approach may lead to binary thinking if we create labels of us vs. them. What is more, it might lead us to exaggerate a turning point. For example, World War I (1914-1918) is often interpreted as a major turning point in European cultural history, even though evidence of these changes were present before 1914.

3. Contemporary Lessons
   a. Are we drawn to a past event to explain or make analogies to current events?

⁹ Lévesque, Thinking Historically, 46-52.
¹⁰ Lévesque, Thinking Historically, 56-59.
b. Be careful, when we engage in this approach, we risk failing to understand the past on its own terms, in its own context.

### Historical Thinking is Messy and Can be Dangerous!

Imagine the following conversation:

**Professor:** Here are the essay questions that you must select from to respond. The essay questions are open-ended.

**Student:** So, we can just give you our opinion?

**Professor:** If by opinion, you mean sentiment, no. Opinions are informed by mustering the evidence in convincing ways.

**Student:** So if we provide an interpretation supported by the documents that you assigned, we will earn an A?

**Professor:** Not necessarily, some interpretations are more convincing than others, and some are just wrong.

**Student:** What do you want us to write?

This conversation has occurred in many history classrooms including my own. Students, worried about grades, want to know what will earn them an A. Yet the study of history is messy and involves uncertainty (that make some students uneasy). Some written responses (whether short answers or full essays) are more convincing than others, and some are simply wrong. Why this ambiguity? Are we just trying to be clever? If you believe that to study history means to memorize a group of facts and regurgitate them onto an exam, then you fail to understand what historical studies should be. Some disciplines offer greater certainty, but history is not like that; in fact before the mid-nineteenth century, history writing was considered literature. The historical record is never complete but textbooks, and now Wikipedia, fail to acknowledge the uncertainty of the past. (If you were taught history in grades K-12, your teachers might not have acknowledged this either). We can never have all the documents or artifacts; we can never know the private thoughts of individuals from the past; we can never know the details of all conversations. Professional historians embrace the uncertainty of the historical past, while outsiders may see this as “unnatural” or messy.

An additional factor that explains why some interpretations are more convincing than others revolves around point-of-view. Where we stand determines what we see, and our point-of-view (e.g. socio-economic status, religious beliefs, gender, etc) influences how we interpret the past. Consider this excerpt from the most recent Statement of Standards by the American Historical Association:

Among the core principles of the historical profession that can seem counterintuitive to non-historians is the conviction, very widely if not universally shared among historians since the nineteenth century, that **practicing history with integrity does not mean being neutral or having no point of view.** Every work of history articulates a particular, limited perspective on the past. Historians hold this view not because they believe that all interpretations are equally valid, or that nothing can ever be known about the past, or that facts do not matter. Quite the contrary. History would...
be pointless if such claims were true, since its most basic premise is that within
certain limits we can indeed know and make sense of past worlds and former times
that now exist only as remembered traces in the present. But the very nature of our
discipline means that historians also understand that all knowledge is situated in
time and place, that all interpretations express a point of view, and that no mortal
mind can ever aspire to omniscience. Because the record of the past is so
fragmentary, absolute historical knowledge is denied us.\(^\text{11}\)

Because absolute knowledge is impossible to achieve in historical studies, some students
may shrug their shoulders and say why bother with it. History is part of the humanities, it
is not a social science. Historical thinking requires students to sift through the evidence and
arrive at the most plausible, convincing interpretations. Again, this is a lifelong learning
skill worthy of developing.

Still a single, master narrative that explains ALL is extremely attractive and dangerous.
Why dangerous? Consider the following observations by John Arnold a professor of history
at Birkbeck University of London.

The idea of a single true story – of History with a capital H – remains tremendously
attractive, and hence tremendously dangerous. Newspapers talk daily of how
“History” will judge politicians or events; politicians argue for foreign policy on the
basis of “what History shows us”; warring factions across the globe justify their
killing on the basis of “their History”.\(^\text{12}\)

We find news pundits, politicians, and others in the public realm using history to claim there
is a single, master narrative that is unshakable. They use these claims to eliminate the
possibility of dialogue and label anyone who disagrees as an opponent.

Professor of Military History, Michael Howard, urged historians to use history to “teach the
importance of comprehending cultural diversity and equipping oneself to cope with it.”
Reflecting the concerns of his generation who fought the Second World War, Howard
elaborated:

Much has properly been made of Neville Chamberlain’s failure to understand Hitler,
as of Roosevelt’s failure to understand Stalin; but these disastrous
misunderstandings are often depicted as cases of honest men being outwitted by
crooks. Alas, the misunderstandings was at a far deeper level than that, and it is
one that is constantly recurring as new elites, almost boastfully ignorant of their
knowledge of any world save their own, acquire authority in some of the most
powerful states in the world. We have seen so much of this since the Second World
War: people often of masterful intelligence, trained usually in law or economics or
perhaps in political science, who have led their governments into disastrous decisions
and miscalculations because they have no awareness whatever of the historical
background, the cultural universe, of the foreign societies with which they have to

\(^{11}\) [http://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/statements-and-
accessed 7 January 2016

Such miscalculations are always dangerous. In our own day they may be lethal on a very large scale indeed.\textsuperscript{13}

Why lethal? Think about events throughout the globe and how movements, politicians, media pundits use history to promote their vision of the past in order to shape the future. In doing so, they encourage binary thinking, it’s “us vs. them.”

Yet history, Sam Wineburg points out, can teach “us a way to make choices, to balance opinions, to tell stories, and to become uneasy – when necessary – about the stories we tell.”\textsuperscript{14} Wineburg, who has dedicated much of his research to how students learn history, also points out the advantages of historical thinking and why it is fraught with cognitive challenges that make us uncomfortable. Life would be so much easier if we would just be told what to think?! I do not teach history by telling students what to think. So, you will be asked to provide plausible interpretations of the documents from the past in response to questions posed by me. You need to realize that some interpretations (answers to the questions) are more convincing than others.

### What makes some historical interpretations more plausible than others?

Not surprising, the answer to this question depends upon the historical questions posed, the available evidence, ability to understand the larger context, and writing skills more generally. Still historians share the following criteria to create a community of trust and respect that we encourage our students to join:

1. Do not arrive at conclusions until you have access to enough reliable information.
2. Aspire to be objective which means acknowledging to yourself that you have biases, preconceptions, and assumptions that may be influencing how you interpret the evidence and present your argument.
3. All conclusions must be drawn from the available evidence or be a reasonable, plausible inference when the evidence is lacking.
4. Your interpretation of history has to stand the test of plausibility, to be trustworthy and gain the reader's confidence.
5. Do not say anything that is contradicted by the available evidence or else you will lose the reader's trust.
6. Do not fabricate evidence.
7. Do not take evidence out of context, misrepresent or misinterpret it.
8. Interpret the past on its own terms that is contextualize, to achieve greater plausibility.
9. Corroborate evidence to avoid the accusation that you have over-generalized or over-simplified.

\begin{quote}
“To be human is to be biased. . . . To be objective does not mean to lack bias. Objectivity requires working according to a set of rules that make clear to yourself and to those who follow and check your steps, how you worked and why you decided what you did. It means sharing and acknowledging premises and assumptions; utilizing known pools of evidence; not ignoring what you know, or could know, including the work of others in your field; and being clear about your criteria for drawing conclusions based on shared evidence.” ~ David Kobrin, Beyond the Textbook (1996)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{13} "Michael Howard,” in Historians on History, ed. John Tosh (Harlow, England: Pearson, 2000), 185-186

\textsuperscript{14} Sam Wineburg, Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), ix
10. Quote primary or secondary sources to persuade or win the trust of the reader. When feasible or available use primary sources more than secondary. Quotations should be used sparingly when the phrasing is unique, to win confidence, and to avoid inauthentic paraphrasing. (Heavy reliance on quotations, with minimal text written by students may signify a recognition of essential ideas, but lacking sufficient comprehension for the writer to put the ideas in his/her own words.)
11. Leave behind your trail of research through footnotes and bibliographies, so that no one will question your integrity.
12. Acknowledge through footnotes how you have been influenced by the ideas of others even if you are paraphrasing or summarizing those ideas.
13. Write an articulate essay that advances a plausible, trustworthy interpretation abiding by the conventions in historical writing; do not simply throw data, facts, or evidence at the reader.
14. If you are writing an essay, a general rule to abide by: never assume your professor is the audience. If your professor does not provide you with a rhetorical audience, imagine one (e.g. someone who is not familiar with the course readings, but may have a “history channel familiarity” with the topic, etc).
15. Follow the professor’s writing assignment guidelines, but if in doubt follow these conventions in historical writing. See below.

Citing Course Photocopy Packet

Example without an author but with paragraph number:
9Witch Hunts at Bramberg, Trial Transcript (Source 3), para 5, 4.

[i.e. title of document, source number, paragraph number, page number to make work retraceable knowing the professor has the title of the original source]

Example with an author but no paragraph numbers:
10Friedrich von Spee, Cautio Criminalis, (Source 5), 10.

[i.e. author, title of work, source number, paragraph number if available, page number to make your work retraceable knowing the professor has the title of the original source]

Composing Writing to Learn (WTL) Assignments

WTLs are not written on the same level of formality as an essay, but tips on what makes some historical interpretations more plausible than others are useful as are tips about framing quotations, etc.

To thrive on WTLs:
1. Read and contemplate the questions in advance
2. Read and study the assigned material (without creating tunnel vision)
3. make your claim (your answers to the questions)
4. support with an either a quotation that you then explain
5. **OR** describe an example that originates from the reading,
6. then if sources are available corroborate with a second example.
Inserting a Footnote with Microsoft Word
If you are using Google Docs, Apple Products, etc, “google” for tips on inserting a footnote.

First: Position cursor at point of inserting footnote And Locate the References tab, in the Footnotes group, click Insert Footnotes:

Cursor will move to the bottom of the page, where you type your citation.

Adjust Line Spacing with Microsoft Word

Shortcut Approach

Set to single or double

More comprehensive
Stylistic Conventions in Historical Writing

In writing essays:

- Your introductory paragraph should end in a thesis.
- Your body paragraphs should begin with a topic sentence that relates back to the thesis. (Paragraph breaking should be determined by the content defined in the topic sentence and not some rule about paragraphs being limited to a certain number of lines, etc)
- Each claim needs to be corroborated and supported with evidence (good rule of thumb: two pieces of evidence or corroboration per paragraph).
- Your concluding paragraph should restate the main points of the body paragraphs and thesis. (Why? Reading an essay requires your working memory to do overtime, and you need to help your reader recall the essentials.)

Writing a thesis:

A thesis statement provides a concise answer to the question posed or to the assignment; it should not simply explain the focus of the essay.

Ineffective thesis statement:
This paper will discuss whether or not the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution represented sharp breaks in historical periods.

Effective thesis statement:
The Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution were distinctive periods of history and represented sharp breaks from one another.
Framing Quotations:

Excerpt from a sample essay that ineffectively frames the quotation:
Wollstonecraft represented the Enlightenment. "Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers -- in a word, better citizens." She also criticizes Rousseau.

Excerpt from a sample essay that effectively frames the quotation:
Mary Wollstonecraft was shaped by and reflected the Enlightenment (an eighteenth-century movement) goals of social justice when she wrote *Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792. In addition, Wollstonecraft epitomized the Enlightenment through a writing style that appealed to her readers' ability to reason. For example, she wrote, "Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us . . . better citizens." In short, Wollstonecraft argued that if men treated women as equals they would benefit as well. Her choice of words indicates a desire to appeal to rational thought by suggesting that slavishness undermines citizenship. Wollstonecraft was particularly critical of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who is frequently associated with the Enlightenment as well.

Features of Ineffective Framing and Quoting
- the writer just jumped into the quotation without making it clear that these are Wollstonecraft’s words
- note that the first time Wollstonecraft’s name is mentioned that the writer left out her first name
- after the quotation, the writer immediately starts a new thought regarding Wollstonecraft’s views of Rousseau
- the writer provides no hints as to the author’s background
- the writer mentions the Enlightenment but offers no time frame
- the quotation is not followed by a footnote

Features of Effective Framing and Quoting
- the writer uses the pronoun she, which has a clear antecedent so that the reader knows these are Wollstonecraft’s words
- the first time the writer mentions Wollstonecraft, s/he uses her first name as well
- after the quotation, the writer tells the reader what the evidence proves; a restatement of the quotation
- the writer sufficiently hints at the author’s background by referring to the title of Wollstonecraft’s book and the year of publication
- assuming that this was the first time the term Enlightenment was used, the writer has assisted the reader by briefly indicating the time frame of the movement in parentheses
- the quotation is followed outside the punctuation marks with a footnote

Most historians prefer papers to be written in the simple past tense, i.e. write about the past in the past tense.

Most historians prefer a writing style that is simple and direct (e.g. prefer "because" over "due to the fact that"); we abhor wordiness.

**Ineffective:** We have done a study of the documents, and we have reached the conclusion that they are invaluable.

**Effective:** We studied the documents and concluded they are invaluable.

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You should write in the active voice, not the passive voice (unless you intentionally want to create doubt), i.e. make the subject and verb easy for a reader to identify.

**Ineffective:** The Nazis were marching.
**Effective:** The Nazis marched.

**Ineffective:** The lamppost was hit by the car.
**Effective:** The car hit the lamppost.

**Ineffective:** The pamphlets were distributed by the Allies.
**Effective:** The Allies distributed the pamphlet.

**Ineffective:** There are many reasons for the outbreak of World War I.
**Effective:** Many reasons exist for the outbreak of World War I.

Avoid the use of clichés, street vernacular, and slang. Why? Their meanings can be too easily misconstrued out of context because of generational and experiential gaps.

Avoid the use of first person (I, me, we). Why? It sounds more professional, authoritative, and objective.

Avoid the use of personal pronouns (you, us). Why? It is vague, lazy, and implies that your or we were in the past.

**Ineffective:** Browning implies that even if you shot the Jews, you may not have personally hated them.
**Effective:** Browning implies that even if German soldiers shot the Jews, the perpetrators (or they) did not personally hate their victims.

Avoid phrases "In my opinion," or "I believe that". Why? Unless you are citing another source, historians assume that what you wrote is your opinion (note I said opinion not sentiment).

Avoid using contractions in your paper such as can't, won't, don't. Why? Use of contractions can undermine the impact of the phrase; cannot, will not, do not that all sound more emphatic.

The first time you mention an individual in your paper, use his/her first and last name, thereafter refer to the individual by his/her last name.

Consider putting essential dates or time periods in parentheses to remind the reader of the time frame. For example, you could write: During the Industrial Revolution (1750-1850) or During the Enlightenment (Eighteenth Century).

A country is an "it" not a "they" (Germany = it; Germans = they).

During class discussions, we generically refer to our primary sources as documents, but in your written essays, you should be more specific and accurate. For example, do not write, "In Adam Smith's document, . . . " rather you should write, "In Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, . . . "

Book titles are always italicized or underlined.

Always allow yourself time to proofread and edit your work; ideally give yourself time to set aside your paper for a day so that you may re-read it with a fresh perspective.
Steps From First Draft to the Final Draft: An Overview

Step 1: Start your essay at least a week before it is due. Do not make your first draft your final draft.

Step 2: First write the body paragraphs, not the introduction.
- This may sound counter-intuitive, but it is worth a try! How can you know what is relevant to introduce before you know what you will write.
- Write the body paragraphs without concerning yourself with word choice, word order, paragraph structure, etc.
- In the process of writing, you will also think through the material more and perhaps develop a more sophisticated understanding of your topic or revise your interpretation.

Step 3: After writing body paragraphs, set your paper aside in order to contemplate the content, structure, composition.

Step 4: Rewrite and edit the paragraphs of the body of your paper. Now you should begin revising paragraph topic sentences, sentence segues, word choice, proper grammar, punctuation, effective incorporation of quotations as evidence, and paragraph transition sentences.

Step 5: Write the conclusion of your essay restating the major points of your argument and some details on how you proved it.

Step 6: After you have revised the body of your essay and conclusion, write the introduction. Be sure to revisit any thesis that you may have composed to ensure that it continues to reflect the argument found in your essay.

Step 7: Proofread and edit to create a professional look; you embarrass yourself and dishonor me by not taking time to proofread and edit your work even though you want me to take your work seriously.

Top Ten Tips to Edit Your Paper

10. **It is polite to point!**  
   If your paper does not have a workable thesis, it is likely to drift. A good thesis does two things: it states (in affirmative terms) what you intend to prove in your paper (its main point), and it lays out a plan for accomplishing this. For example: World War I resulted from a series of tensions that developed among European nations at the turn of the century. Among these were imperialism, militarism, and an unstable alliance system.

9. **Sometimes it pays to be narrow minded.**  
   Students get into trouble when they try to do too much. You cannot possibly write about everything there is to say about a subject. Notice how the sample thesis above limits the paper to just three aspects of origins World War I: imperialism, militarism, and alliances.

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8. **Sink rocks, don't skip stones.**
   Pursue a few things in detail. No one wants to read a paper that merely mentions things; **discuss them.** The usual rule of thumb is that it is better to say a lot about a few things than a very little about many things. Think of it as the difference between skipping a stone across a pond versus tossing a rock to the bottom. Be a rock when you write.

7. **Oh yeah, says who?**
   Do not even bother to quote unless it is clear in the text itself who it is you are quoting. You cannot accomplish this with a footnote; you must identify the speaker in the text. Example: According to historian Mary Beth Norton, "The prosperity of the late Gilded Age largely ignored industrial workers."

6. **So what?**
   There is a difference between historical evidence and trivia. If the material does not relate to your thesis, it might be interesting but it is not relevant. It is also your job to **analyze** the material you present. Unless you tell your reader why something is important, your information is simply random material.

5. **Finish your veggies . . . and your thoughts!**
   Do not forget to tell the entire story and to tell your reader why you have included what you chose. Your motives may be clear in your mind, but your audience reads what is on the paper, not what is on your mind.

4. **One good example is worth a thousand colorful adjectives.**
   Be specific. Every time you make a point, have at least one example to illustrate it. Any hack can use a thesaurus and string together vague adjectives, but a good writer can make her/his work live through examples that make vague points tangible and real. Do not tell me something was "really bad;" explain what made it bad.

3. **Who the hell are "the people?"**
   Avoid general categories that are so vague they are meaningless. Be concrete and specific. For example: "The Indians" is a vague phrase: "Cherokees in southwest Georgia in the 1820s" is specific. And the "American or French or Japanese . . . people" as a whole never agreed on a single thing, so do not tell me they did! Tell me which people you mean [such as German government officials or French intellectuals].

2. **Do not put socks in your underwear drawer.**
   The vast majority of "organizational problems" come when the writer fails to keep related material in the same place. Thoroughly discuss a topic, then move on to another point. For example, if you are discussing Natives and slaves in a paper, discuss each separately. Do not begin to discuss Natives, switch to slaves, and then jump back to Natives. Your paper should be like an orderly chest of drawers, with each distinct item in its own place.

1. **Proofread and edit.**
   This is number one because so few actually do it. Careless errors, clunky phrases, spelling mistakes, and deplorable grammar abound simply because too many writers think they are done once they put the final period onto the page. Not so, Moe. Read your work [out loud and with meaning]. If what you have written sounds wrong to you, it is not going to sound any better to me. Remember: it is no sin to not know how to spell something. It is a sin not to look it up.