Successful studies

A STUDENT GUIDE TO ASSESSMENT

Department of History
LANCASTER UNIVERSITY | BOWLAND MAIN COLLEGE, LA1 4YT
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Successful study

Academic study is what universities are all about, whether you are a student or a member of the academic staff. In history our studying is largely book and journal article work; and most of your time will be devoted to reading, thinking, and writing. The following notes are offered by way of advice to help you to use your time to your best advantage.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE STUDYING

Organise your time

You will find that about 10 hours per week are earmarked for lectures, seminars and tutorials. The rest is your own and you will need to be quite firm with yourself about how you use it. Try to keep a balance between work and ‘play’ and between the time you devote to different courses. Remember that you will be studying several different courses at any one time and that it is in your own interests to devote sufficient time to each one. You will probably find yourself having to write one essay every week to 10 days during most of your time as an undergraduate. Obviously, your essay writing will tend to determine your reading much of the time, but always remember the requirement to prepare for seminars and to read more widely around your subjects.

It is up to you how hard and how long you work - different people have different ways of working. In terms of hours devoted to studying, 15 hours per week is far too little; 80 hours is far too much. We suggest that the discipline of a typical 8-hour working day or a 40-hour week is about right. When and where you work is also up to you. Some people work better early in the day, others late into the night. Some find they work best in their own room, others in the University Library.

Overall, plan your study time and aim to keep a balance between courses and between work and leisure activities.

Organise your reading

Books are central to the study of history, so you should expect to buy a good number in the course of your degree. Your tutors will indicate on reading lists which books or electronic texts are essential and particularly worth buying. We realise that your funds for buying books will be limited and tutors try to recommend comparatively inexpensive editions as basic texts. Use the University Bookshop (Blackwell’s) and remember also that the Students’ Union runs a second-hand bookshop on campus.

The books you buy will only be the tip of the iceberg. You will need to get to know the History collections in the University Library intimately and to use them extensively. Plan your reading well in advance, as history books are often in great demand. You will need to know how: to find your way about the Library; to exploit its online catalogues; to recall books that have been borrowed by someone else; and to make efficient use of the High Demand Collection, as tutors will ensure that the most sought-after books for particular courses are placed there during term-time.
Make effective notes

Develop a system of note-taking and note-keeping which will enable you to refresh your memory about particular arguments and details at a later stage. Your lecture notes ought to provide a map of the course, while the notes you make from your reading should fill in the detail. Decide whether you intend to arrange your notes by topic or by author. Note-taking is a personal matter. Some people make notes as they read; others wait until the end of a chapter or article before trying to summarise the essence of the author’s argument. Try to make your notes concise and orderly; good notes help to focus your attention on the key issues, whether the aim is helping your contribution to seminar discussion, or essay writing. When making notes from a book or journal article always record bibliographical details (author; title; journal title; date; publisher).

Make the course your own

There is rarely a hard and fast body of knowledge with which we expect you to fill your mind as a result of studying a particular history course. The aims and objectives of the course will be spelt out in the course documents, but what you take away from the course at the end of the day depends largely on how you, as an individual, approach it. Obviously, your tutor will expect you to gain a broad overview of the period and topics covered by the course, and to complete the coursework he/she sets. But, in order to make the most of a course, and to get the greatest enjoyment from studying it, give yourself ample rein to read widely and voraciously and really to throw yourself into the subject. Some Moodle websites give you the chance to discuss with or seek help from other students online. Studying at university need not be a solitary grind; it should be stimulating, fun and collective.

Problems and difficulties

If you have problems with your work (or with matters that have a bearing upon your work and attendance) don’t let them build up or get unduly worried about them. Many students find that they lose steam mid-way through their degree, but regain their energy after a week or two. If you find that you are having problems, whether as a result of illness or personal difficulties, or lack of motivation, talk to your course tutor about them or contact the Part I or Part II Student Advisor as appropriate, by making an appointment to come and see him/her with the appropriate Coordinator.

If you have suffered from an illness, injury, or other medical problem which you feel has clearly affected your attendance at seminars and/or academic work in a manner which could have an important effect upon your assessment, you should report it via the Electronic Monitoring system. If you are experiencing a non-medical problem, you could also choose to supply the Part I or Part II Student Advisor with a written statement. For further information, please see the Part I or Part II Coordinator within the Department.

If your questions or difficulties are more academic in nature, then contact your Academic Tutor, and there are also staff in Faculty Learning Development who run writing mentors and support.
Learning Resources

The Library and its learning resources

For History students the most important support service is the University Library, which contains about 60,000 history books and microfilms, over 3,200 journals or subscriptions, and a large and increasing number of invaluable electronic resources through OneSearch. The library to a History student is like the laboratory to a science student, and you should expect to spend much time using its resources. There is a system of High Demand loans and multiple copies of books in heavy demand. Other services include an online catalogue, photocopying, micro-reading and online information retrieval.

In addition, Lancaster University Library has extensive and growing access to subscription databases and collections, which you will be introduced to in Part I and use extensively at Part II. Historical resources, such as complete reproductions of old newspapers and books, databases and access to many historical journals, the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography etc., are revolutionising teaching and research.

To use online databases and e-journals, visit http://onesearch.lancaster.ac.uk
If you are accessing the library site from outside the university network, you will be prompted to enter your university login details (username and password). The Library has information about this on its web pages. If you have difficulties in securing items in the Library, speak to your tutor.

Please treat books and other Library resources with respect. All items in the Library are a common resource, made available for the benefit of all students who wish to use them. If they are annotated or ‘marked up’ and/or if pages of chapters and articles are removed, that resource ceases to be common, the Library’s stock is depleted and its service to other students diminished. Book mutilation is theft and the Department has agreed to treat it as such, and thus as a serious University offence.

**Information Technology (IT) facilities and resources**

History students may also make use of the extensive IT facilities on the campus. All students receive an email account and internet access. Information Systems Services (ISS), located in the Learning Zone, has an advice desk called the ISS Service Desk (10987 / 01524 510987), which is open 9.00am – 5.00pm on weekdays and is the place to go with any queries about ISS services and facilities. Service Desk staff deal with general queries, assist with using the University's Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle - see 8.2), assist with username/password issues, maintain public access printers, deal with software queries, assist with general email/web space/configuration queries, book appointments for the ISS ResNet Workshop, help users with printing posters and other similar printing issues, report faults with lab PCs and equipment and other advice on training courses.

**Moodle**

Lancaster University uses a platform called Moodle for all modules' virtual learning environments; the Department aims to make its Moodle sites available to students three weeks prior to the start of the relevant term (though this may not be possible at the very start of the academic year). Moodle provides information and resources to support your learning. Tutors utilise Moodle in a wide variety of ways to deliver learning materials (handouts, presentations, multimedia, resources, bibliographies etc.), engage you in active learning (exercises and online tests, discussion spaces, learning quizzes) and update you with information about your programme. You will also submit your coursework electronically via the Moodle facility in each module's space (see Section 9.4). Each tutor uses Moodle in different ways that suit the subject and aims of their module, so they will explain to you how to use the online learning space for their module.

Moodle can be accessed via the following address:

https://mle.lancaster.ac.uk
and via the iLancaster App.

Once you are logged in, you will be able to access the dedicated spaces for each of the modules you are enrolled in.
LU Student Portal [https://portal.lancaster.ac.uk/]
LU Portal is your personal home page for Moodle with key information about the modules you are studying, your summative grades, your library reading lists, and also your timetable and exam timetable in an integrated calendar.

Mahara
Mahara is a private & social web space to record and share reflections, start new groups, mashup both external and user generated content, create and publish portfolios and digital CVs to both an internal and external audience.

You will need your University login and password to access the University’s eLearning services.

Coursework

Why write coursework?
All Departments at Lancaster University require you to produce written coursework as a necessary part of your learning and evaluation. Coursework essays and other written assignments count towards your overall assessment in Part I and Part II so it is essential that you understand from the outset its importance and what is required of you.

There are several reasons why we attach particular importance to written coursework, and especially to essays. First, writing essays plays a vital part in learning how to study History at University. Essays are one of the best indicators of how well you have understood the issues and the subject matter of your courses and skill in written argument and expression is essential for any historian. Second, an essay on which you have worked for a week or two in your own time is a different kind of exercise from one written in an examination in an hour or less: we are seeking competence in both fields. Third, many students find examinations an ordeal.

Coursework takes the ‘all or nothing’ anxiety out of the examinations since you already have the benefit of your assessed coursework behind you. The experience of writing term-time essays and discussing them with your tutors will help you when it comes to the examinations at the end of the year.

Weighting of coursework
The Department of History operates a system of coursework assessment (CWA) in all its courses. Students should note that the grade obtained for their coursework counts towards their overall score for a course.

In Part I, the average coursework mark for HIST100 counts for 50% of your total assessment; the examination mark forming the remaining 50%. The second optional Part I, HIST111, is assessed by coursework only – essays, seminar assessment, and, in HIST199, group projects and reflective essay.

In Part II, modules are assessed either through a combination of coursework and exam or through coursework only. Where modules are assessed by the coursework-exam combination, the typical rule is that the coursework mark normally counts for 40% of your total assessment and the examination mark forms the remaining 60%. For modules that are assessed entirely
through coursework (e.g. HIST250 and HIST251, some other HIST2XX modules, and the Dissertation module - HIST 300), coursework marks count for 100% of your total assessment. The assessment details of each module are presented in the relevant course Study Guide.

It is therefore obviously in your interests to work hard and consistently at coursework in all your courses and to have a set of good grades ‘under your belt’ before taking your examinations.

**Written coursework requirements**

For each of your History courses/modules you will usually be asked to submit one or more items of coursework for assessment.

In Part I, the standard requirements for HIST100 are two shorter essays (or equivalent) of 2,000 words, one long essay of 2,500 words, and a gobbet exercise. For further information see the HIST100 Study Guide. If you take the second Part I, HIST111, you will write two essays (???), have a seminar assessment, **work on a group project (2,000 words), and write a reflective learning log (500 words)**.

In each Part II HIST2XX module, c.2,500 words or equivalent is normally required. We say ‘or equivalent’ because, while most work consists of essays, it may include variants such as study diaries, seminar presentations, group projects, and in Special Subjects ‘gobbet’ exercises. The requirements for Special Subject (60 credit) courses vary, but overall you should expect to write about 10,000 words or equivalent. The exact coursework requirements of each module are presented in the relevant course Study Guide.

The normal WORD LIMIT for coursework essays for those HIST2XX modules that follow the standard coursework essay and exam format is 2000-2500 words EXCLUDING footnotes and the Bibliography. However, word limits may vary from module to module; please read carefully the relevant details in each module’s Study Guide and, if unsure, check with your tutors.

Essay topics are usually assigned by your tutor. Most tutors publish lists of essay questions from which you may choose; some tutors are prepared to allow you to negotiate with them a topic of your choice. When you have decided on the question you wish to tackle, it is a good idea to see your tutor (during his/her office hours) to discuss what reading you should do to start you off. When you are ready to start writing your essay, most tutors will be very happy to discuss your essay plan with you, if you are unsure whether you have approached the question in the right way.
WRITING ESSAYS

Below you will find some brief advice on preparing and writing essays. However the Department of History urges you also to read something more substantial on the subject of ‘writing history’. There are many short books of this kind, none of which is perfect.

However, after careful consideration we strongly recommend that you buy, read and regularly use the following book, copies of which are available from the University Blackwell’s bookshop:


In the brief guidelines that follow, relevant sections of Storey are indicated in brackets.

Preparation

Try to reckon how much time you have to read for the essay in hand, bearing in mind your commitments to other courses and your need to prepare for seminars, etc. Make sure that you understand what the essay title or question means, so that you concentrate on the topics and evidence that are strictly relevant; if in doubt, ask your tutor to explain. Put the books that s/he has recommended in order of priority, the more general first, the more specialised later - though if library resources are under pressure you must seize your chances. Don’t stay too long with general textbooks. One, or at the most two, should suffice to open up the territory, and after that you should move on to the recommended monographs or articles by historians who have worked on the original sources. With books, use the Contents and Index to guide you to the parts that you most need. There will generally be more to read on the subject than you have time for, so don’t waste time on outdated or second-rate works or websites that have not been recommended. Take notes sparingly; read all that you have time for before you start writing. (On research for, and the preparation and planning of, essays, see Storey).

Putting pen to paper

Each essay question presents its own difficulties, but here is some general advice. There are some basics – double spacing; single-sided if possible (though we accept many printers are set to a double-sided default for environmental reasons); numbered pages; point size not smaller than 12.

Virtually all the questions you will be asked to consider require analytical treatment. As you write, constantly ask yourself whether you are presenting an argument. Of all the traps to be avoided, the greatest is narrative. An awareness of the sequence of events is often very important but rather than writing a mere chronology select significant episodes or facts to illustrate and support your argument (see Storey).

Make sure that what you are writing is directly relevant to the question. Take particular care over the way the question is phrased: it may ask you to examine only a specific issue, not the whole broad topic, or to comment on a particular historical controversy. As you do your preliminary reading and writing keep going back to the question to make sure that you have grasped its full significance and implications. If you are still baffled consult your tutor, who will be only too pleased to help.
Try to aim for a balance between interpretation and fact, blending general argument with specific illustration (see Storey).

Use quotations sparingly to further or clinch an argument; over-use of quotations amounts to an abdication of your responsibility to develop your own ideas and select your own illustrative examples. *It has been known for students to produce essays which amount to little more than a long series of quotations from secondary authorities. Although these quotations may be properly and fully referenced (and therefore do not fall within the University’s definitions of plagiarism), they nevertheless represent poor practice. The idea is that the essays you write should reflect your own ideas on the basis of what you read. Well-chosen, brief, quotations aside, the writing should be obviously and recognisably your own work. It follows that essays which incorporate excessively long quotations and very little of you will receive lower marks (on quoting, referencing and the avoidance of plagiarism, see Storey).*

Avoid producing merely a list of points. Try to make one part of your essay lead logically and naturally into the next. Use the opening paragraph to identify the main issues or to introduce the central problems posed. The last paragraph should provide a suitable conclusion to your argument and a final response to the question.

Keep your essay concise and to the point. Try to cultivate economy as well as accuracy of expression. Establish a point clearly and with adequate evidence, but then move on to the next; don’t go on repeating yourself. Never ramble: it is part of the discipline of essay-writing to handle large historical questions within the word-limit set by your tutor.

Adopt a critical attitude towards your sources, and don’t be afraid of controversies. Historians thrive on them!

Avoid purple prose and journalese: they have no place in serious historical analysis and are likely to be penalised. Take care over spelling, especially of proper nouns, and use a dictionary if you have any doubts about your spelling generally (on these and other matters pertaining to good writing, read with particularly close attention Storey).

Use footnotes or other references where necessary, and always when you have used a quotation. Proper referencing of work you have consulted is very important, especially in the light of the University’s framework on plagiarism. Plagiarism is discussed in the next section.

References and Bibliography

The following guidelines on references are adapted from those given to Third Year Dissertation students. As a general rule, First and Second Year essays will usually contain around 8-15 items in the Bibliography, and 16-28 footnotes or endnotes, although a case might be made for fewer, and very thorough work might contain more.

Citations and references fulfil four basic purposes. All are important:

- They convey necessary information to the reader about what works are relevant and they enable references to be checked;
- They add strength to your arguments by showing the reader the sources of the statements you are making in support of them;
- They give evidence of your ability to follow standard academic form by orderly, precise and rigorous use of your sources;
- They safeguard you against charges of plagiarism (see below, Section 9.3).
REFERENCES IN NUMBERED FOOTNOTES OR ENDNOTES

Use these to give the source of every direct quotation and to support statements for which the authority is not likely to be obvious to the reader. You will want to cite books, journal articles, online resources and other relevant sources. References should always be provided to identify the source of specific information, e.g., a list of statistics. They should also be used to identify the source of facts, quotations, or interpretations. Your references should always include page numbers of the books or articles you are citing, or the full URL of the online resource you have used.

The Harvard system of referencing in a text, e.g. (Evans 2001: 273) is NOT preferred by historians because footnoting of primary sources is next to impossible this way. You may use either:

- **Footnotes**, which appear at the bottom of each page (these are the easiest to use); or
- **Endnotes** gathered at the end of your essay or chapter.

These should contain scholarly references which add strength to your argument by showing the reader the sources for the statements you are making. They demonstrate that you are acquainted with the relevant secondary literature, that you have made precise and rigorous use of primary sources, and that you have the ability to follow standard academic conventions for presentation. They enable the reader to follow up and check the validity of the evidence you have used.

Footnotes or endnotes should be used:

- to indicate further relevant sources which could be consulted;
- to indicate the source(s) for specific information (e.g., a list of statistics or a direct quotation);
- to add support to your argument and statements by reference to other historians’ work or primary sources which can be used to corroborate them.

**Footnotes/endnotes should NOT be used to extend the argument.** You therefore cannot smuggle in greater length by this means.

It is acceptable to cite a number of works in one note if, for example, you want to demonstrate that several sources are relevant to the section of your essay or dissertation that precedes the reference. Do not multiply notes unnecessarily.

Computer software (such as Microsoft Word) enables you to insert footnote or endnote numbers in the text which automatically link to the relevant footnote. The numbers will change if you edit the text by cutting and pasting sections. (Be aware that in current versions of Word, there are several options for pasting and if you choose ‘Keep Text Only’ you will lose any notes in the section you are pasting in. Be very careful to use a pasting option that preserves the notes).
Presentation Conventions

See below for advice on different conventions for your footnotes or endnotes and Bibliography.

You should follow the conventions used in the examples below, unless, for some good reason that you have discussed with your tutor, you think a different convention would be better. You will not be penalised for deviating from the recommended format so long as you follow one of the clear and consistent conventions which are recognised in academic publications and which your tutor has approved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placing numbers in the text</th>
<th>Always insert the number in the text after and not before punctuation, and preferably at the end of sentences.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authors’ names</td>
<td>In your references (both in notes and the Bibliography), you may give either the full name of the author of a source (e.g., Thomas Henry Huxley, Zachariah Lawson), or only their surname and initials (e.g., T. H. Huxley, Z. Lawson). If in doubt, cite as in the original.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeated citations</td>
<td>If you use the same source a number of times, you may use ‘hereafter’ and/or abbreviations. For example, if you cite English Historical Review several times you are permitted the first time you cite it to add ‘(hereafter EHR)’; or with the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, it would be ‘(hereafter ODNB)’. For books and articles simply use the author’s surname and a shortened version of the title without writing ‘hereafter’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page numbers</td>
<td>Where possible and applicable, exact page numbers should be given in a reference.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BOOKS

First citing

Author, title in italics, place of publication, date of publication in brackets, comma, and then p. or pp. followed by page reference(s), e.g.,


Subsequent citing

If you refer to the same work by Macfarlane again, use a conventional abbreviated version:

**JOURNAL ARTICLES**

Author, the title of the article in single inverted commas, the title of the journal in italics, the volume number (and the issue number if there is one, after a colon), the date of publication in brackets, comma, and the page or pages you are referring to:


Use ‘p.’ when citing a single page, and ‘pp.’ when citing multiple pages:


BUT


You may use a short version for subsequent references, e.g., Le Patourel, ‘Norman Succession’, pp. 244-46.

**CHAPTERS IN EDITED BOOKS**


A short version can be used for subsequent references.

**VISUAL MATERIAL**

You should include (where appropriate and available) the artist’s name, the title of the work in italics, the date, medium, dimensions (if available), current location and source of reproduction, including page and illustration numbers:

Walter Withers, *Tranquil Winter* (1895) [painting], 122 cm x 76 cm. Held at the National Gallery of Victoria.

**PUBLISHED PRIMARY SOURCES**

These should usually be referenced as if they were a book giving, where appropriate, author, title, year of publication, and page number.

**NEWSPAPERS**

Newspaper title in italics; date (day, month, year). Page references optional.

*Leeds Mercury*, 16 January 1834.

**UNPUBLISHED PRIMARY SOURCES**

Give the name of the record office/archive, followed by the reference number, or failing that, a brief description of the document, such as:

HOUSE OF COMMONS PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS FROM ONLINE RESOURCE

Title of the paper, year/session, page reference, or column number if it is a debate. Make clear you have used the online resource and not the published version or microfiche. Please ask for advice on citing if you have used these.

Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Early Closing of Shops, 1901, p. 6.

UNPUBLISHED THESES AND DISSERTATIONS

Give the name of the author, title enclosed in inverted commas (not in italics because it is unpublished), level of degree, university at which the dissertation was produced, and date, the last 3 all in brackets, such as:


FILMS AND TV

You need to cite the title, year of release, director, production company and format.

Alien (1979). Directed by Ridley Scott. Twentieth Century Fox [DVD].
Coronation Street (broadcast 9 February 1967), Granada TV. Material consulted on microform/microfiche.

NEWSPAPERS ON MICROFICHE OR MICROFORM

The convention here is similar to that for citing other periodicals or journal articles.

‘On the return of Dr Benjamin Franklin to America’ [microform], The Times, 24 November 1785, p. 2.

INTERVIEWS / ORAL TESTIMONIES

In the case of a personal interview you need to give the interviewer’s name as well as that of the interviewee, place where the interview was conducted, and the date of the interview, e.g.,

Interview conducted by Helen Harris, Edward Edwards, Lancaster, 18 April 2015.

In the case of oral testimony consulted in archives, you will also need to identify the archive and the appropriate reference number, as with other unpublished sources. NB: If you are intending to conduct your own interviews (for example for your Dissertation) you must follow ethical procedures. Ask your supervisor.
WEBSITES
Author’s name (if available), title of resource (if available), the name of the website, the date accessed in square brackets, and the full URL.


BIBLIOGRAPHY

This should come at the very end of your work. A long Bibliography, which is never necessary in Part I and not always in Part II (check with your tutor), is usually divided into sections. The most obvious are ‘Primary Sources’ and ‘Secondary Sources’, with websites also a separate category. Remember you must always include properly referenced websites if you have drawn on material from them, using the full web address.

The Bibliography, and any sub-sections, should be ordered alphabetically, by the surname (family name) of the author or editor. Include all the works you have cited in the references and others that you have found important to your understanding of the subject. Do not pad out the Bibliography with books you have not consulted.

The first line of any item in the Bibliography is left-justified (in other words, it is in line with the left-hand margin). If the item runs over one line, the second and subsequent lines are indented rightwards.

The recommended format for bibliographic information is very much in line with the guidance on footnote references given above, with a couple of exceptions. In the Bibliography:

- **Surname comes first** (but where there is more than one author, the surname comes first only for the first author):


- **The full page range should be given for journal articles and book chapters**, rather than simply the page cited. For chapters in edited books, the page range follows a comma and the abbreviation pp. For journal articles, the page range follows a colon, without the abbreviation pp.:


If you are still in doubt, ask your tutor, or follow the layout and conventions in Storey, Writing History: A Guide for Students, or books that you have read, while remembering that the so-called Harvard system is rarely of use in History.

LIBRARY GUIDANCE

For the Library's guidance on referencing, including End Note and RefMe see:

http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/library/referencing/referencing-guides/

I suggest we include a link to the Library guide to plagiarism (perhaps around p. 47). I suggest as text 'For the Library guide to plagiarism, including a helpful online tutorial, see:'

http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/library/referencing/what-is-plagiarism/

Chicago Manual of Style

If you remain in doubt about how to reference, then the citation convention which best matches that favoured by the History Department can be found in the Chicago Manual of Style - http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html.

If you click on ‘Quick Citation Guides’ – http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html and then on ‘Notes and Bibliography system’ you will find a layout guide.

The best advice is 1) be consistent, and 2) include as much of the bibliographical detail as you can. [Note: for works that you have read in digitized facsimile on databases, for example (e.g., articles on Jstor, or newspapers online), you do not need to include the URL. It is as if you have read the paper copy but on the screen.]

DISSERTATIONS

The bibliographies on your dissertations will follow the same referencing and bibliographic conventions.

You may have used hand written primary sources, however, and so the sources that you used in your dissertation bibliography should be listed in the following order and categories:

- Manuscript sources (listed by alphabetical order of the name of the repository (archive, library etc.) where they can be seen. So, British Library, St. Pancreas, Lancashire Record Office, Preston, Library of Congress, The National Archives, Kew, for example.)
- Printed primary sources (transcriptions of primary sources that have been printed in editions, calendars (such as Calendar of State Papers Domestic, Hansard debates etc.)
- Newspapers (in alphabetical title of the newspaper).

[NB. It is not necessary to list each item within each of the above categories].
- Secondary sources.

Webpages may appear as primary or secondary sources depending on the type of site and the purposes to which it has been put.
COMMON ESSAY MISTAKES AND HOW TO AVOID THEM.
Here is a quick guide to some common mistakes in essay writing.

1. Title
The full essay title as it appears in the course booklet should come at the start of your essay. If you make a mistake in transcribing it, it looks bad.

2. Spelling mistakes
Your argument loses credibility if you cannot spell the names of the people or things involved.

3. Punctuation
Punctuation is important. ‘Let’s eat, Grandma!’ and ‘Let’s eat Grandma!’ have two very different meanings, and the only difference between them is the humble comma. So do not over- or under-punctuate. Read your work back to spot errors:

‘The idea of a democracy, has often been used to explain the Reform Act of 1867’. Here the comma is not needed.

4. Apostrophes
They are so easy to use. They indicate either possession or contraction:
- **Contraction**: ‘cannot’ can be contracted to ‘can’t’, with the apostrophe indicating the missing letters. Do not use these in your essay – words like ‘can’t’, ‘wouldn’t’ and ‘don’t’ are too informal.
- **Possession**: ‘Gladstone’s policies’ – here the apostrophe indicates possession. The exception to the possessive rule is ‘its’: ‘It’s not difficult to understand the act and its effects’.
- **Plural**: apostrophes are not used to indicate the plural – ‘Many newspapers’ reported the speech’ is incorrect.

5. Sentences
Every sentence must have a **subject** and a **verb**. A common mistake is to leave out one of these:

- ‘The workhouse was a place widely feared by the working classes. Especially after the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834’.

There is no verb in the second sentence. It is easily corrected by turning the full-stop into a comma.

6. Italics
Italicise the titles of books, newspapers, magazines, and films, but not articles:

‘The Daily Mail published an article entitled ‘Charles Dickens and Attitudes to the Poor’ which discussed the writing of Oliver Twist’.

7. Footnote positioning
The footnote indicator goes after punctuation not before¹. This example is therefore wrong.

8. Pronouns
‘When *one* pictures stepping stones, *they* often think of a smooth transition from one state to another.’

Here, the pronouns do not match – one is singular and one is plural. Many essays contain multiple such errors.

**9. Tense**
As a general rule, use the present tense when discussing historians’ views (‘Wainwright argues’), but the past tense when discussing historical events in the past (‘Disraeli believed’).

**10. Quotations**
‘*Never quote when you can paraphrase the meaning instead. It is more effective to use short phrases for quotes than long blocks of text. Never italicise quotes. And never centre justify them*’

**11. Dates**
Do not be slapdash with dates: the Great Reform Act was not passed in 1932; the French Revolution did not begin in 1889:

- The eighteenth century = 1700s (not 1800s)
- The nineteenth century = 1800s (not 1900s)
- The twentieth century = 1900s

**12. Capitalisations**
You only capitalise *proper nouns* – the names of people, places, organisations, titles of books and newspapers, films. You do not capitalise *abstract nouns*, no matter how important they are. So, do not write about ‘The relationship between Class and Politics in the Nineteenth Century’!

**13. Hyphens**
Do phrases like ‘middle-class’ need a hyphen or not? It depends whether they are used adjectivally or not:

- ‘Middle-class voters supported Conservative policies’.
- ‘Conservative policies benefited the middle class’.

Both of these are correct – in the first example, the phrase is being used adjectivally, to describe voters. In the second case it is being used as a noun.

**14. Essayese**
Your writing should adopt the correct formal register. But this does not mean you have to write over-complicated, cumbersome, pompous prose: this is ‘essayese’ and should be avoided:

Plain English  
Essayese
‘I think that’  
‘It is possible that one can propound the view that’
‘This argument is wrong’  
‘This point of view must be seen by us here as being utterly fallacious’

Plain English is easier to understand and takes fewer words.

**15. Number Your Pages.**