

**UNDERGRADUATE
STYLE GUIDE**

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
UNDERGRADUATE STYLE GUIDE

CONTENTS

- Introduction
- 1) Format
- 2) Quotations
- 3) Numbers
- 4) Dates
- 5) Money
- 6) Footnotes & Endnotes
- 7) Bibliographies
- 8) British versus American Usage
- 9) Some Common Errors

INTRODUCTION

Presentation matters: it is an essential part of the historian's craft, not an optional extra. Neglected or poorly executed, your style will irritate and distract readers, weakening the force of your arguments. An essay that is well written and properly laid out will, in contrast, gain your readers' confidence and convey your message to them as efficiently as possible.

Many different conventions are used in scholarly publications, and this can be confusing. What we recommend here is drawn from the best current practice and should enable you to deal with most problems that arise. You should make consistent use of these rules and guidelines in all your written work—assessed essays as well as term work.

Writing an essay can be a long, hard struggle, and at the end of the process (or in the wee hours of the morning) you may not wish to go over your text yet again. But that is exactly what you must do, to weed out typos, awkward sentence structures, unclear arguments etc. Spelling mistakes may seem trivial, but they are always irritating to tutors, and tend to undermine the reader's confidence in your work. Before printing the final version of your essay, use the spelling-check in your word processing programme and double-check doubtful words in a dictionary. Then reread your essay to catch errors missed (or created) by the spelling-check. You will identify far more errors and infelicities if you set the essay aside for at least a few hours before your final reading and correction of it.

If you are unsure about any of these guidelines, please ask your essay tutors for clarification.

1) Format

- a) Margins: You should leave wide margins at the sides, top and bottom of your essay.
There should be a 1.5 inch (4 cm) margin at the left hand side of the page.
- b) Spacing: The text of your essay should be *double-spaced*. The footnotes (or endnotes) should however be *single-spaced*. Your bibliography may also be *single-spaced*, though it is helpful to *double-space* between individual entries.

- c) Indentation: *Except* for the very first paragraph of your essay, the first line of every paragraph should be indented. You do not need to add extra spacing between paragraphs: the indentation alone tells the reader that you have begun a new paragraph.
- d) Pagination: Number each page of your essay.
- e) Word-count: Provide a full word-count for your essay, either on your title-page or cover-sheet.

2) Quotations

- a) Ordinary quotations: Use single (not double) quotation marks for ordinary quotations.
Note that the final quotation mark is normally placed inside punctuation (comma, period etc). However, when the quotation forms a complete sentence, the quotation mark comes after the full stop. If the material you cite itself contains a quotation from source, you will indicate this quote-within-a quote by using double quotation marks.

Examples: Evans argues convincingly that ‘the industrial revolution was a Protracted process, not a single catastrophic event’.
According the Evans, ‘Recent research suggests that the industrial revolution was a protracted process, not a single catastrophic event.’
Chatterjee’s claim that ‘a group of propertied observers shouted “Hang all the convicted felons by the toes” as the procession passed by’ suggests the intensity of middle-class support for public executions.

- b) Inset or block quotations: When you quote four or more lines of text (or quote lines of poetry), use an inset quotation—that is, type the quotation as a separate block of *double-spaced* text consistently indented from the left margin (the right-hand margin of an inset quotation is not indented). Do not use quotation marks in inset quotations except to indicate a quote within the inset material: use *double* quotation marks to indicate this quote-within-the quote. Avoid over-using inset quotations, especially in short essays. Be judicious about what you cite—short quotes that are pithy and to the point are more convincing than extended blocks of other writers’ text.
Your own voice—not those of the authors you cite—should dominate your essay.
- c) Ellipses: Always use ellipses—that is, three dots—to indicate that you have omitted material within your quotation.

Example: Evans argues that ‘the industrial revolution was...not a single catastrophic event’.

3) Numbers

Numbers up to one hundred, when they occur in normal prose and are not statistical, should be written in words rather than numerals. When there are many figures, however, it is better to use words only for numbers up to nine. Avoid beginning a sentence with a numeral. Spell out ‘per cent’ rather than using the % sign in the text.

4) Dates

These should normally be given as 2 September 1939: commas should not be used. Spell out centuries rather than using numerals: write ‘the eighteenth century’ not ‘the 18th century’. Use hyphenation to indicate adjectival usage of centuries: ‘In the eighteenth century, barbers commonly performed surgery, but unfortunately for patients not all eighteenth-century barbers were adept with knife and needle.’

5) Money

Simple sums of money should be given in words: ‘A pint of beer cost two shillings.’ Sums of money which are more complex may be written in figures: ‘A shortage of grain raised the price of beer shockingly, to 2s. 6 1/2d.’ British currency was decimalised in February 1971. There is however no need to convert old currency into decimal equivalents.

6) Footnotes and Endnotes

The secret of good footnoting is good note-taking. Always keep a complete record of the full source (author, title, date and place of publication, specific page numbers) as you take notes. Whenever you copy any passage—even a short phrase—verbatim into your notes, be sure to use inverted commas in your notes to indicate that you have done so. This will help you to avoid accidental plagiarism.

You may place your notes either at the bottom of each page (footnotes) or at the end of your text, before the Bibliography (endnotes). Most of your notes will be reference notes, identifying the books and other sources from which you have drawn your quotations, evidence or data. All quotations you use must be identified with either a footnote or an endnote. You do not need to reference general information widely available in the historical literature: for example, you do not need to provide a footnote to substantiate your claim that the French revolution began in 1789. However, if you note that peasants in the south of France burned 112 chateaux, destroyed over 567 metric tons of seigneurial documentation and drank 892 bottles of their former seigneurs’ wine in 1789, you need to indicate in a note the source of your statistics. Notes should give readers all the information that they would need to trace your sources, but not more than is necessary. They should be clear and consistent in presentation. Normally, an essay will average two or three footnotes per page, but this number will vary according to the content of your text. Your essay tutors will help you to find the right balance between under- and over-referencing.

Every footnote must refer to a source which you have actually examined. It is never correct to cite a source that you have not personally examined without indicating this fact in your note. Thus, if you are citing a letter from F.D. Roosevelt quoted by the author William Leuchtenberg, your footnote might read: ‘F.D. Roosevelt to Cordell Hull, 28 August 1940, cited in William Leuchtenburg, Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, p. 305.’

Models for footnotes and endnotes drawn from various types of sources are given below. Make careful note of the kind and placement of punctuation, the use of italics etc:

a) Articles in scholarly journals:

First citation: Use: Author’s full name, ‘Full Title of Article’, *Journal Name*, volume number (date), page number(s).

e.g. Peter Bailey, ‘Parasexuality and Glamour. The Victorian Barmaid as Cultural Prototype’, *Gender and History*, 2 (1990), pp. 150-53.

Second and subsequent citations: Use: Author's surname, 'Short Title', page number(s).

e.g. Bailey, 'Parosexuality and Glamour', p. 164.

b) Books

First citation: Use: Author's full name, *Full Title of Book* (Place of publication, date of publication), page number(s).

Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London, 1994), p. 67.

Second and subsequent citations: Use: Surname, *Short Title*, page number(s).

Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, pp. 352-54.

c) Edited books

First citation: Use: Author's full name (ed.), *Full Title of Book* (number of volumes if work has more than one volume, Place of publication, date of publication), volume cited, page(s) cited.

W.H.B. Court (ed.), *Studies in the Coal Industry* (2 vols., Birmingham, 1947), I, pp. 144-46.

Second and subsequent citations: Use: Surname, *Short Title*, volume number, page number(s).

Court (ed.), *Studies*, II, p. 76.

d) Chapters in edited books

First citation: Use: Author's Full Name, 'Full Title of Chapter', in Full Names of Editors, *Full Title of Book* (Place of publication, date of publication), page number(s).

Sarah Gaunt, 'Visual Propaganda in the Later Middle Ages', in B. Taithe and T. Thornton (eds), *Propaganda. Political Rhetoric and Identity, 1300-2000* (Stroud, 1999), pp. 27-40.

Second and subsequent citations: Use surname, 'Short title', page number(s).

Gaunt, 'Visual Propaganda', p. 39.

e) Manuscript sources

First citation: Birmingham University Library, Court Papers, 'Court Manuscript on Coal', W.H.B. Court to Sir Keith Hancock, 24 July 1916.

Second and subsequent citations: Court Papers, Memoranda on Wage Differentials, 1943-45. Memorandum No. 2, 1944, p. 432.

Birmingham Central Library, Charles Parker Archive, MSS 24/7b, Charles Parker to Arnold Wesker, 2 March 1964.

Public Record Office, HO 317/52. Letter from G. Weller to J. Armitage, 24 September 1916.

Nottinghamshire Record Office, GC98/1-3, Notebooks of Sir Gervase Clifton JP, 1795-1803.
Warwickshire County Record Office, D/234, Parish of Astley, Overseers' Accounts, 1732-1741.

f) Websites

First citation: Use: Author's full name, 'Title of Page', Title of complete work if page is part of a group of documents, date page was created. URL (date you saw page).

Debbie Abilock, 'Research on a Complex Topic', Nueva Library Help, 8 August 1996. <<http://www.neuva.pvt.k.12.ca.us/-debbie/library/research.html>> (1 October 2001).

Second and subsequent citations: Use: Author's surname, 'Short title'.

Abilock, 'Research on a Complex Topic'.

Note: These precise formats may not suit all circumstances. Works published as printed books or articles, but which you have consulted on a Website, should be cited in the usual way for printed material, but with a note—[consulted at <http://www...> (date)]—added in brackets. This rule also applies to manuscript or printed documents that have been made available on the Web.

g) Photographs, illustrations, etc:

If you copy a photo, illustration, chart, etc. from another source into your essay, use a credit line to indicate your source. The credit line should be placed immediately below the illustration and should include a descriptive title for the illustration plus full bibliographical information on the source from which it derives. The bibliographical information will adhere to the same style as a footnote - except that it will not begin with a footnote number.

Examples:

Illustration 1: Photograph of a man-eating tiger in Bihar, 1872. From Harold Jameson, *The Tiger in Modern History* (London, 1989), 322.

Illustration 2: Oil painting of a man eating a tiger in Bengal, 1754. From Jane Lewis, 'Eating Tigers in Historical Perspective', *History Today*, 11, 3 (June 1999), 67.

7) Bibliographies

Your essays should always end with a bibliography of all works referenced in your text. Note that bibliography form departs in a number of respects from footnote (or endnote) style: you will need to reformat your footnotes to make your Bibliography. In particular, note that material in your Bibliography is organised alphabetically by the author's surname. When referencing articles or chapters in edited volumes in your Bibliography, cite the page numbers

of the article or chapter as a whole—not just the particular pages you have cited in your footnotes. Manuscript sources should be listed in a separate section of your bibliography.

Sample Bibliography:

Abilock, Debbie, 'Research on a Complex Topic', Nueva Library Help, 8 August 1996.
<<http://www.neuva.pvt.k.12.ca.us/~debbie/library/research.html>> (1 October 2001).

Bailey, Peter, 'Parasexuality and Glamour. The Victorian Barmaid as Cultural Prototype',
Gender and History, 2 (1990), pp. 148-71.

Court, W.H.B., *Studies in the Coal Industry* (2 vols., Birmingham, 1947).

Gaunt, Sarah, 'Visual Propaganda in the Late Middle Ages', in B. Taithe and T. Thornton
(eds), *Propaganda. Political Rhetoric and Identity, 1300-2000* (Stroud, 1999), pp. 27-40.

Hobsbawm, Eric, *Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London, 1994)

8) British versus American Usage: The style illustrated above is standard British usage. A number of the books and articles you read will be published in the US and thus will employ standard American style, which departs in various respects from British usage. (For example, American usage calls for use of double, rather than single, quotation marks in ordinary quotes and around journal titles, and places punctuation marks outside, rather than inside, terminal punctuation). For your essays at Warwick, always consistently employ standard British usage as detailed above—even when referring to material published in the US which uses American conventions. If you spend a year abroad at a US university, however, you will need to employ American style in your quotations, footnotes, etc. If your course tutor in the US does not provide a style guide, you will find all the information you need in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, the standard reference on American usage, which will be available in the reference section of your university's library.

9) Some Common Spelling, Grammar and Syntax Errors:

a) Contractions (abbreviated verbs): Do not use contractions in essays, unless they appear in material you are quoting. Example: use 'does not', not 'doesn't', use 'is not', not 'isn't', use 'cannot', not 'can't'.

b) Common spelling mistakes:

occurred (NOT occured)
entered (NOT enterred)
propaganda (NOT propoganda)
supersede (NOT supercede)
preferred (NOT prefered)
separate (NOT sepearate)

c) It's/Its: 'it's' is the contraction of 'it is'; in contrast, 'its' means 'belonging to it'. It's true that misuse of these terms makes tutors foam at the mouth—an ugly sight. It's also true that an essay in which this mistake is made is likely to have its final mark lowered by an outraged tutor.

You can avoid this problem by avoiding contractions: 'it's' should not appear in your essay in the first place, leaving all the more room in its sentences for proper use of the possessive form of 'it'.

- d) Singulars and Plurals: If the subject of your sentence is singular, your verb must be singular; if the subject is plural, your verb too must be plural. Two nouns whose singular and plural forms are often confused are datum (singular)/data (plural) and criterion (singular)/criteria (plural).

Incorrect: The data is consistent. Correct: The data are consistent.

Incorrect: The criterion are shifting. Correct: The criterion is shifting.

- e) Genitive apostrophes:

To form the possessive of a singular noun, add 's: the bee's knees (that is, one bee has many knees)

To form the possessive of a plural noun, usually you will add the apostrophe after the terminal s: the bees' knees (that is, the many knees of several bees)

The most common exceptions to this rule are the plural forms of men, women and children: men's, women's and children's

- f) Commas: Use commas to help the reader negotiate a complex sentence, but do not use them to string together a succession of linked sentences or to link a seemingly endless succession of main clauses. If you use a comma to separate two independent clauses in a sentence, always insert 'and' before the second clause: 'During the suffragette agitation the Liberal party was besieged by angry feminists, and Irish nationalists further destabilised political equilibrium.' In general, you need a comma where you would naturally pause if reading the passage out loud.

If you are using a comma to separate out part of a sentence as a minor digression, remember to put commas both at the beginning and the end of the phrase in question: 'Decolonisation in the Far East, Japanese occupation policies notwithstanding, was primarily an anti-western impulse'.

- g) Colons and Semi-colons:

Use a colon within a sentence as a bridge, either introducing an illustration of a point made at the beginning of the sentence or to introduce a list. Thus, "Nationalism is often a virulent force: tens of thousands have died in conflicts over nationality in eastern Europe.' Similarly, 'Vichy collaboration can be ascribed to many forces: self-interest, defeatism and Gestapo entrapment.'

Use a semi-colon to link two thematically related but grammatically independent sentences. For example, 'The erection of the Berlin wall marked a new phase in the divisive Cold War; the subsequent reunification of the two German states arguably signalled a dramatic new development in European unification.' Semi-Colons may also be used as super-commas, where the complexity of sentence structure renders a comma alone insufficient.

For example, 'Imperial developments precipitated large-scale migration: migrants moved from the colonies to Europe; within the different colonies of a single nation, as illustrated by Asian migration to South and East Africa; and also from Europe itself, particularly the Celtic fringe, to colonised territories.

- h) Passive and Active Voice: Where possible, avoid the passive voice, choosing instead sentence structures in which it is clear who is doing what to whom. Passive voice constructions include phrases such as: 'the cost of living was raised', 'the monarchy was abolished', and 'racist ideologies were widely disseminated'. In all of these passive constructions, it is unclear where agency and causality reside. Attempts to assess and assign agency and causality form the very heart of historical analysis, and use of the passive voice detracts from that essential task. Use active voice constructions wherever possible: they will add clarity to your writing and help you to focus on analysis rather than simple narrative. For example, the passive constructions above might be rewritten as follows. 'The failure of agricultural production to keep pace with rising birth rates raised the cost of living.' 'The monarchy was abolished by a small group of disaffected financiers determined to seize power for themselves.' 'Newspaper proprietors eager to increase circulation of their journals were at the forefront of efforts to disseminate racist ideologies at the turn of the century.'