

Writing Guide for Students of History

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Thanks

The edition of *Writing Guide for Students of History* is an adaptation of a publication by Lori Jones and Corrine Gaudin, published in 2013. The adaptation was made by Jennifer Dekker with assistance from Julieann Mercer in 2024. The authors and those who worked on the adaptation would like to thank everyone who made this open education resource possible. In particular, an OER grant from the University of Ottawa library was instrumental in moving this project forward.

How to use this guide

Developing solid skills in research, analysis, and writing are fundamental to a successful university education, as well as to many future job prospects. These skills are particularly relevant to the discipline of history, and the research paper is often one of the most important components of any history course. It is vital that you set aside enough time to do it properly. A history paper is not just a compilation of facts that you cut and paste into a report. A good paper needs to explain something important about the past; it requires you to think critically about the topic, to draw on different sources, to sift through and analyze competing claims. You typically need to proceed through each of the following stages: defining a topic, building a bibliography, reading and taking notes, writing an outline, composing a draft, and revising your draft into a polished essay. These stages often overlap.

This guide addresses some of the most common questions related to researching, writing, and formatting a history research paper. It provides visual examples for the main stages of the history research paper writing process. It is not, however, meant to be comprehensive and does not include every question and concern that might arise. If you have questions that are not addressed in this manual, please consult your professor, the Academic Writing Help Centre, or the resources listed in the bibliography, and/or the links provided in the footnotes.

We recommend that you read the entire guide once; you can subsequently jump directly to various sections for quick reference. First-year students, as well as non-history majors taking a history course for the first time should also look at the Appendix which provides some additional advice.

Professors may have specific assignment requirements that could diverge from what is outlined below. Therefore, regardless of what is presented in this guide, always follow your Professor's instructions.

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PART I
RESEARCH

1. Research: Defining an Essay Topic and Thesis Statement

Defining your topic is arguably the most important, and often the most difficult, task in writing an essay. An ill-defined topic will never produce a good paper. A history essay is much more than a list of facts about events that happened in the past: it must explain. It is also more than a repetition of what other historians have already concluded: it must include your interpretation. A good historical essay is focused on a limited topic. To narrow your topic, ask the questions who, what, where, when, and/or why something happened as it did.

Steps for defining a topic:

- Identify a topic of interest. If your professor has provided a list of topics, identify one that is interesting to you. If you do not have a list from which to select a topic, think of something related to the course content about which you would like to know more.
- Review the work already done on the topic (historiography) and familiarize yourself with the basic facts and events: find out what is known about the topic in textbooks, historical encyclopedias, or other general and specialized works.
- Narrow down your topic. Select one that is narrow enough to be feasible and manageable. An ill-defined or too-broad topic will never produce a good paper. Even if your professor provided the topic, you will probably still need to refine it.

The next step is to **develop a thesis statement**. Most history essay thesis statements are argumentative, meaning that they state something that will be debated, argued, and defended in the paper. Remember that the point of studying history is not just to describe what happened, but to explain why it happened. The thesis statement also establishes the scope of the assignment (what will, and what will not, be covered).

Steps for developing a thesis:

- Turn your narrowed-down topic into a research question. Avoid questions that can be answered simply with a description.
- Establish a position. Develop an argument that directly addresses your topic or question. Having only a general or vague idea of what you will argue is not necessarily problematic at this point – you can revise your argument as your research progresses.
- Refine your argument. Use your research findings to revise and strengthen your thesis statement and argument. Ask the following questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Why is this important? Why did it happen? What was the cause or impact?

As you begin to read about your topic, you may find that you have to redefine or refine it and your thesis statement more than once. This is perfectly normal!

Qualities of a strong thesis

Specific: A good thesis argues a specific aspect of the selected topic. It is focused enough to be fully explored within the essay.

Explanatory: A good thesis contains an explanation and justification for the position it proposes. Agreeing or disagreeing with something is not enough; the overall reason for agreeing or disagreeing must also be provided.

Argumentative: A good thesis is debatable. It takes a stand and says something relevant and important about the topic.

For more information about defining a topic and developing a thesis, see:

[Writing History: Formulating a Research Question](#)

Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M Williams, eds., *The Craft of Research*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

Look especially at “[Generating Research Questions](#).”

“[Developing a Thesis Statement](#)” by the Writing Center at Ohio State University.

[How to Write a Thesis Introduction Statement](#) (video) by the UCLA library

2. Sample topic and thesis statement

Here's how to go from a general topic to a refined thesis statement.

General topic: Immigrants in Canada

Refined topic: Immigrant workers in Canada 1830 – 1940

More specific: British pauper children as indentured workers in Canada 1830 – 1940

Questions:

- Why were British pauper children used as indentured workers in Canada between 1830 and 1940?
- Why did the practice end in the 1940s?

Preliminary thesis:

British pauper children filled an important labour shortage on Canadian farms between 1830 and 1940.

Refined thesis:

Canada's practice of importing young children labourers was the controversial result of Britain's attempts to deal with the poor and to fill Canada's labour needs. Changing public perceptions of childhood eventually led to the demise of child labour importation.

Additional resource: [How to Write a Thesis Statement](#) (video)

3. Building a bibliography

The existing body of historical work on a topic is called historiography. Knowing what has already been written on your topic is a good point of departure to propose an original contribution. The bibliography – the list of sources that you consult – is the foundation of your paper: you cannot write a good paper based on a bad bibliography. Part of the work of building a good bibliography is choosing the best sources from the mass of material that is available in the library and on the internet. Take advantage of the workshops offered by the Library – they will provide you with information about using the full potential of the Library.

Like any other encyclopedia, Wikipedia can be a starting point, but it is neither scholarly nor always accurate. Beware of relying on it! Do not just Google your topic either – you will miss most of the scholarly literature.

Finding materials relevant to your topic:

- **Specialized encyclopedias and bibliographies:** There are a number of good, specialized historical encyclopedias and bibliographies. These are useful for background reading. They are not always up-to-date, so make sure to check the publication date or last update (if online). Examples: Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History; Encyclopedia of World War II; Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History. You can find what resources exist for your topic on the library website listed next.
- **Online history research guide:** This [guide](#) provides links to many online databases and history websites that you can search for relevant materials, such as books, articles, newspapers, archives, art, video, etc.
- **Library discovery tool:** The discovery tool, [Omni](#), allows you to search for books, journals, and other content that the library either owns or has access to. You can search by keyword, subject, title, author, etc. Omni also searches across the collections of 16 different universities in Ontario. It is a good place to start, but ultimately insufficient: each search will provide limited results.
- **Recent books:** review the footnotes and bibliographies in recent books and articles.
- **Shelf search:** Once you find a relevant book, search the library shelf nearby to find related books. Note however, that most recent acquisitions are digital and will not be on the library shelf. To find them, you will need to use Omni.

4. Primary versus secondary sources

A primary source is a piece of first-hand evidence, a surviving trace of the past available to us in the present. Primary sources allow direct entry into an historical event. They include but are not limited to:

- Personal journals, diaries, letters
- Interviews and speeches
- Photographs and maps
- Manuscripts
- Historical publications, such as books, pamphlets, treatises, etc.
- Newspaper articles (often, but not always)
- Magazine articles (when used for social history or as documentary evidence)
- Meeting minutes, receipts, or other administrative documents
- Court transcripts, legal or notarial documents, and legislative documents
- Video and film

Secondary sources, on the other hand, are second-hand, published accounts about something that happened in the past. They often use primary sources, but are written after (often long after) the event has occurred. Secondary sources provide an interpretation of what happened, why it happened, etc. Secondary sources include but are not limited to:

- Scholarly articles
- Monographs (books on specific topics)
- History textbooks
- Biographies
- Published stories or movies about historical events

The difference between a primary and secondary source is often determined by when they were originally created and how you use them.

5. Finding and Evaluating Sources

There are many sources of information: journal articles, books, electronic resources, and so on. Ensure that the material that you use for your essay is acceptable; in other words, find scholarly, evidence-based analyses. Use sources such as textbooks and 'popular' (non-scholarly) texts only for orientation reading. You can often recognize these by their lack of footnotes.

While there is no foolproof way to choose the best books and articles before reading them, there are some criteria that you can apply when making your choice.

When selecting material, ensure to verify the following:

- **Publisher:** University presses function with a system of peer review that (usually) guarantees that minimum standards of reliability and scholarship are respected.
- **Date:** You should pay attention to the date of publication. Historical research is cumulative, and since an older book cannot reflect later findings, it is important to have some recent items in your bibliography. However, newer is not always better, and you should not neglect the older classics.
- **Frequency of citation:** A good way of identifying the "classics" is by paying attention to the authors who are most often mentioned in introductions. If in the course of doing your research, you find that one or two authors are always cited and discussed you can safely conclude that their work is important.
- **Book reviews:** Most scholarly books are reviewed in academic journals. You can find the references to book reviews either in *America: History and Life* (Canadian or US history), or in *Book Review Index* (all fields).
- **Abstracts:** You should look at online summaries of scholarly articles about your topic. The most useful are *America: History and Life* (Canadian and US history) and *Historical Abstracts* (the rest of the world since 1450).
- **Table of Contents or Introductions:** Before you launch into a careful reading of a book, skim the table of contents and the introduction to make a preliminary evaluation of the quality and the utility of the work.

6. Evaluating Online Sources

Be very cautious with material that you find on the internet. Unless what you find is a scholarly journal, then you will need to evaluate the site's reliability and scholarly professionalism. You will also need to determine whether it is providing primary or secondary sources. Also pay attention to how the website is presenting documents. (For example: Were documents selected to illustrate a certain point. Is it the original text, or is it an excerpt? Etc.)

Warning signs	Good signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The site contains many strong, controversial opinions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A renowned university, museum, library, or research institute hosts the site.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The author is not easy to find elsewhere on the internet or in published sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The website contains a clear mission statement (always read "About ...")
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The organization's affiliation is not easy to find on the internet or in published sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The website fully identifies and references its sources (either primary or secondary).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The site is not affiliated with a university or research institution	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The website is never or rarely updated.	

7. Useful online databases

The following databases can be accessed through the University of Ottawa Library or freely through the internet. Keep in mind that some databases only provide access to journals from particular years. None is complete: you may need to check more than one database to find the information that you need. For other resources specific to particular regions or periods, see <https://uottawa.libguides.com/History-en>

Database	Focus & Advantages	Disadvantages
Historical Abstracts Accessible through the University of Ottawa Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes all branches of world history (1450 to present) except Canada & US. Database of 2000+ journals. Includes article citations, summaries in English, and some links to full-text documents. Includes articles in many languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not include book reviews prior to 2011. You will find too much unless you learn to use the search filters (by period, by language etc.)
America History and Life Accessible through the University of Ottawa Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Database of 1800+ journals addressing the history and culture of the Americas. Includes abstracts, citations, and links to full text documents. Includes abstracts in English of articles published in other languages. Includes book and media reviews. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on articles in English.
RI-OPAC Accessible at http://opac.regesta-imperii.de/lang_en/index.php	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The leading database of publications related to all disciplines in medieval studies, in all European languages. Includes theses, essays, and workshop proceedings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not provide a direct link to all items but does provide full bibliographic information so that you can find it elsewhere.
JSTOR Accessible through the University of Ottawa Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full text archive with direct links to articles in scholarly journals in many disciplines. Includes topics from non-history fields as it is multi-disciplinary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often does not include recent articles. Includes far fewer history journals than the databases noted above.
Google Scholar Accessible at http://scholar.google.ca/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers all disciplines. Includes a list of some of the works that have cited the books or articles you find. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often requires scrolling through many pages to find what you need. Does not provide direct access to most sources unless you configure your web browser to link to the library's subscriptions.

8. Taking notes

Note taking is not an end in itself, but a means towards an end. You take notes to help you remember information, to facilitate the recollection process, and to know precisely where the information came from.

If you write your essay from notes, rather than from photocopies of your source material, you can organize the material, have it in front of you in the appropriate order, and flip through your notes as you write. You will be less likely to omit important information (because you have forgotten where you read it, or even that you have it).

Taking notes will help you to keep track of your ideas as you do your research. In the end, you likely will not use all of your notes, but taking them will guide your research and will help you to link together various historians' works when you are ready to write your paper.

Keep your notes until you get your marked essay back – they could come in handy to answer any questions raised by the marker.

A good note-taking system:

- Allows you to quickly find (or re-find) any piece of information.
- Tells you exactly where the information comes from (its source – make sure to note down both the book/article where the information comes from and the page number on which you found it).
- Reminds you whether the notes are in your own words, or are verbatim transcriptions of the sources (to prevent inadvertent plagiarism).

Suggested note taking programs:

- [Zotero website:](#)
 - Easy to use for note taking, annotations, and citations.
 - Available for free.
- [OneNote website:](#)
 - Easily colour code your notes from any device.

- Available for free.
- **Google Keep website:**
 - Organize notes on any device.
 - Available for free.
- **Glean website:**
 - Variety of note taking options, including ability to record lectures.
 - Yearly subscription fee.
 - Registered with the University of Ottawa's **Academic Accommodation Service**? Your note taking program may qualify for funding! Information about the **Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment** is available online.

PART II

PRESENTATION AND WRITING

9. Using Quotations

A quotation consists of the exact words found in a source. All quotations must be cited (footnoted); not doing so constitutes plagiarism, which means presenting someone else's words, ideas, or numbers as your own. There are examples of plagiarism in the final section of this book.

Quotations should never carry your argument, but can illustrate or support it. As a general rule, you should quote secondary sources sparingly. Place short quotes (1-2 lines) in the text using quotation marks; longer quotes are indented (right and left) and single-spaced, with no quotation marks. Always introduce quotations to indicate who is speaking.

You should quote primary sources when:

- Your primary source provides a fact or concept that directly supports your argument.
- Your source uses terminology that is now obsolete, but that conveys the atmosphere/way of thinking of the time.
- The source is unclear or ambiguous; you are obliged to put your own interpretation on it, and want to make the reader aware of this fact.

You should quote a secondary source when:

- The historian quoted is using a phrase or expression or formulating a problem in a way that is unique and that you find particularly useful for your argument.
- The passage quoted is critical to your argument – for instance, you are challenging the author's interpretation and intend to refute it

10. Footnotes and bibliographies

Nearly all historians in North America who write in English use the Chicago Manual of Style/Turabian Style for citations. This includes both footnotes (or endnotes) and a bibliography at the end of the essay. Footnotes indicate to your reader where your information or ideas came from. The bibliography lists – in alphabetical order by author’s last name – all the sources you used. Proper citations are a fundamental rule of academic writing, as they allow readers to verify the accuracy and veracity of the information that you have provided. Citing styles vary from discipline to discipline, but the obligation to cite does not. It is entirely acceptable to present another person’s ideas in your essay. However, it must be done appropriately to avoid plagiarism (see previous page for more information). History essays typically use footnotes rather than endnotes. Footnotes are inserted into the text at the end of a sentence (after the period) or at the end of a quote (after the quotation marks). Footnotes are numbered sequentially using Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc).

What should you footnote?

- All direct quotations, including from the internet
- Any summary of another person’s words or ideas (simply paraphrasing or rewording someone else’s ideas without citing the source of those ideas is still plagiarism)
- The use of someone else’s data or statistics.
- You do not need to footnote general knowledge. This includes basic facts that can be found in any general textbook or encyclopedia.

How much should you footnote?

If you are footnoting each sentence, it is a sign that you are compiling information, rather than doing your own analysis. A rough rule of thumb is that there should be two to four footnotes per page, on average.

Bibliographies are placed at the end of the essay, starting on a new page. List the sources that you used alphabetically, by the author’s or editors’ last name (if there is more than one author or editor, use the first name listed to determine where to put the source in alphabetical order). Where there is no author or editor, list the source by its title. Include only those sources that you actually used to write your paper, and make sure to include a sufficient mix of appropriate books and scholarly articles. List primary sources (original documents) separately from secondary sources (books or articles written about events by historians): you can separate them under the subheadings Primary Sources and Secondary Sources.

The format style for footnotes differs slightly from that for bibliographies. The most common examples of both are provided below. For many additional formatting examples, see the Chicago Manual of Style, 17th edition, which is available electronically through the University of Ottawa library.

Footnote and bibliography format samples are provided in Section 3 of this book.

11. Creating an Outline – The Basic Principles

Before you begin to write, you need to organize the information that you have collected into an outline. A poorly organized paper may leave you and your reader confused and wondering what point you are trying to make. Preparing an outline helps you to develop an argument that answers the main question(s) in your paper. It will also provide the skeletal structure of your paper and facilitate the actual writing process. Remember, your essay should contain an argument, not just be a description of something from the past.

Steps for creating an essay outline

- Select your essay topic. A history essay should have a clearly stated argument or thesis. A narrowed down topic often suggests a particular question, the answer to which becomes your thesis. [Link to Defining an Essay Topic and Thesis Statement]
- Categorize the information that you have collected: identify the general themes or issues that you want to address. Then refine your categorization, distinguishing between main arguments, secondary arguments, and supporting evidence.
- Prepare a preliminary outline of your essay early in the research process to guide your reading and writing and to help you to avoid collecting unnecessary information. The arguments or questions that you have identified may be used as headings. The outline is not a straitjacket: it will evolve as your research provides you with more information.
- Group your ideas/arguments logically. Identify the main and secondary ideas. Organize the ideas in a logical order (for example, chronologically, general to specific, advantages and disadvantages, similarities and differences, or causes and effects).
- Check relevance: Make certain each section is relevant to your argument (helps answer your main question). Even if your facts and sub-arguments are correct, if they are not relevant, then they have no place in your paper.

12. Writing, Revising, and Editing the Essay

Your goal in writing a history essay is to express your thoughts and ideas in a clear and structured way. Remember to focus on your thesis and follow your outline. Obviously, as you proceed with your research, you will come up with more questions that you can work into your outline, and some of your original questions might change. You might discover that your original topic was too broad, and that you can write an entire paper on just one of your questions. Likewise, the organization of your outline may change as you learn more.

You must give readers reasons to believe your story: you cannot write a history essay without referring to your sources or without backing up your opinions with evidence.

Revising and editing an essay are the final steps in writing a history essay. Revising consists of reading through the text to check and improve on the content. Editing consists of looking for errors in grammar, syntax, word usage, spelling, and punctuation.

Writing (argument) checklist

- Am I following my thesis?
- Am I following my outline?
- Is each paragraph relevant? (i.e., does each one help to answer the question or support the argument?)
- Do my main arguments proceed logically? Have I provided sufficient (and convincing) supporting evidence for them?
- Am I correctly integrating my sources and references?

13. History-Specific Problems and Tips

There are numerous excellent writing guides available, notably those prepared by the [Academic Writing Help Centre](#). Below are a few common problems to avoid when writing history essays.

Flaws in Argumentation

- Too hasty generalizations that are based on insufficient evidence: (e.g., “The War of 1812 was the defining moment in Canadian history.” Compared to what? You cannot review and rank every major event in Canadian history in an undergraduate essay. It would be far better to zero in on an aspect of the war’s impact (e.g. “The War of 1812 played a key role in defining Upper Canada’s identity”).
- Oversimplification of a cause and effect relationship: (e.g., “Prohibition eliminated drunkenness.” – Prohibition did not stop everyone from drinking, so the relationship between cause and effect is too simplistic).
- Post hoc fallacy that assumes that since event B happened after event A, the latter caused the former: (e.g., “Parties in power are often blamed for recessions.” The stock market crash of 1929 happened after Herbert Hoover was elected president in 1929, but the election of Hoover did not cause the crash.)
- Insufficient evidence to support your assertions: (e.g., how do we know that what you say is true?) You need to prove your argument, not just assert it.

Stylistic Flaws

- Excessive use of the passive voice: the historian’s goal is to describe and discuss who did what to whom. The active voice tells us who did the action. The passive voice, on the other hand, tells us only that some action was done. Consider the following two sentences. “France was invaded for the third time in a century” (passive voice); “Germany invaded France for the third time in a century” (active voice). The second sentence is much clearer about who (Germany) did what (invade) to whom (France).
- Use of the historical present: write about the past using the past tense. Consider these two phrases: “Calvin Coolidge does not believe that the government should intervene in the business process. Within a year after he leaves office, the Great Depression begins” (historical present); If the reader was not aware when the Great Depression occurred, she might think that it was happening now! The sentence is much clearer in past tense: “Calvin Coolidge did

not believe that the government should intervene in the business process.

Within a year after he had left office, the Great Depression began" (past tense).

- Excessive use of 'I': this expresses a personal opinion, not a historical argument. Arguments are logical reasoning supported by verifiable evidence; history essays should not be personal.
- Plagiarism: it is essential that you acknowledge the source of all information and ideas that you use in your essay. All quotations, information, and any idea that is not your own must be indicated by a footnote reference. Even a discussion from a book that you summarize must be acknowledged. The use of secondary sources does not detract from your work; your contribution lies in the way that you put the information together and present your argument.
- Footnote format: make sure that you use footnotes, not parenthetical references.

Common Grammatical Errors

- Pronoun misuse – make sure that pronouns such as 'she,' 'he,' or 'it' clearly refer to identifiable nouns. Use "it," not "they," for places such as countries and for institutions, including political parties and governments.
- Apostrophe misuse – an apostrophe indicates possession. Do not use it to indicate the plural: 1870's should be written as 1870s.

PART III
EXAMPLES

14. Sample History Essay Outline

Topic: Canada's importation of British pauper children as workers from 1830 to 1940.

Introduction

- **Introduce the topic:** Between the 1830s and the 1940s, Canada imported more than 100,000 poor British children as indentured apprentices.
- **Importance of topic:** Many Canadians are descended from these young children, but this episode in history has not yet received significant scholarly attention.
- **Thesis issues:** What motivated Britain to export and Canada to import more than 100,000 young pauper children as indentured labourers? What caused the practice to end.

Main body of essay

Include the main sections or secondary topics, all of which support the main thesis. Each section may include several paragraphs, but include only one main idea in each paragraph. Ensure that there are links and transitions between ideas and paragraphs.

(i) Britain's attempts to deal with the 'problem' of pauper children:

- charitable efforts to deal with the poor and the growth of philanthropic movements
- assisted emigration of the poor, including children

(ii) Canada's need for cheap labour:

- population gaps and labour shortages
- child apprenticeship programmes and advocacy for the importation of child labourers
- changes to Canadian immigration policy

(iii) Changing public perceptions of immigrants generally and of pauper children in particular:

- public and media support for imported child labourers
- public and media criticism of poor immigrants

Conclusion

Summary of the paper and of the main arguments: Between the 1830s and 1940s, Canada imported more than 100,000 children through the juvenile immigration movement as apprenticed or indentured workers. The children were valued more for their labour than for their existence as children. The work that philanthropic organisations and individuals did, removing British children and sending them to Canada for their own good, was and remains controversial.

15. Sample title page

Sample Title Page

The essay title must be informative and indicate your topic, period of study, and, if possible, your approach

**Not Here by Choice:
Canada's Importation of Child Labourers between the 1830s and 1940s**

Course: HIS (Course Number)

Submitted to: Professor (Professor's Name)

Submitted by: Student Name (+ Student Number)

Date: (Submission Date)

Include the course code, the professor's name, your name and student number, and the date

Note that the title page is not numbered

16. Bibliography and footnote formatting

EXAMPLES

Book (one author)

Footnote:

First reference: ¹Corinne Gaudin, *Ruling Peasants: Village and State in Late Imperial Russia* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007), 165.

Subsequent reference: ²Gaudin, *Ruling Peasants*, 154.

Bibliography entry:

Gaudin, Corinne. *Ruling Peasants: Village and State in Late Imperial Russia*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007.

Book (two or three authors)

Footnote:

First reference: ³Béatrice Craig and Maxime Dagenais, *The Land in Between: The Upper Saint John Valley, Prehistory to World War I* (Gardiner, ME: Tilbury House, 2008), 387.

Subsequent reference: ⁴Craig and Dagenais, *Land in Between*, 238.

Bibliography entry: Craig, Béatrice and Maxime Dagenais. *The Land in Between: The Upper Saint John Valley, Prehistory to World War I*. Gardiner, ME: Tilbury House, 2008.

Book (four or more authors)

Footnote:

First reference: ⁵Raymond Blake et al., *Narrating a Nation: Canadian History Pre-Confederation* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 2010), 27.

Subsequent reference: ⁶Blake et al., *Narrating a Nation*, 38.

Bibliography entry: Blake, Raymond, Jeff Keshen, Norman Knowles, and Barbara Messamore. *Narrating a Nation: Canadian History PreConfederation*. Toronto: McGrawHill Ryerson, 2010.

Edited Volume

Footnote:

First reference: ⁷Richard Connors and John M. Law, ed., *Forging Alberta's Constitutional Framework* (Edmonton AB: University of Alberta Press, 2005), 3.

Subsequent reference: ⁸Connors and Law, *Constitutional Framework*, 1.

Bibliography entry: Connors, Richard and John M. Law, ed. *Forging Alberta's Constitutional Framework*. Edmonton AB: University of Alberta Press, 2005.

Book in a series

Footnote:

First reference: ⁹Heather Murray, *Not in This Family: Gays and the Meaning of Kinship in Postwar*

North America, Politics and Culture in Modern America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 246.

Subsequent reference: ¹⁰Murray, *Gays and Kinship*, 117.

Bibliography entry:

Murray, Heather. *Not in This Family: Gays and the Meaning of Kinship in Postwar North America. Politics and Culture in Modern America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.

Journal article (paper copy)

Footnote:

First reference: ¹¹Galen Roger Perras, "Future Plays Will Depend On How the Next One Works': Franklin Roosevelt and the Canadian Legations' Discussions of January 1938," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 9, no. 2 (Winter 2006-07): 2.

Subsequent reference: ¹²Perras, "Future Plays," 3.

Bibliography entry: Perras, Galen Roger. "Future Plays Will Depend On How the Next One Works': Franklin Roosevelt and the Canadian Legations' Discussions of January 1938." *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 9, no. 2 (Winter 2006-07): 1-3.

Formatting Bibliography Entries

General Guidelines for formatting bibliography entries:

Titles of articles, chapters, and web pages are in quotation marks.

Titles of films, books, periodicals (newspapers, magazines, journals, etc.), podcasts, reports, websites and online videos are italicized.

In English, the first word, the last word, and all other words in the title except articles, conjunctions, and prepositions of less than four letters begin with a capital letter.

In French, only the first word of the title begins with a capital letter.

If necessary, the edition or collection is put after the title of the book.

If necessary, the volume or volume is put before the number of pages.

If the publishing house is located in a little-known city (like Wilson) or one with a confusing name (like Washington), the name of the city must be followed by the name of the province, territory, state or country.¹

Bibliography entries indicate all the bibliographic elements required to find the original source:

The last name and first name of the author;
The title of the work;

The place and publishing house if it is a book; Or
The volume and number if it is a periodical article;
The date of publication;
The number of pages.

Pay particular attention to word order, use of periods versus commas, and the shortened author and title used in subsequent references. Specific types of sources with corresponding examples are listed below.

17. Sample essay

**Not Here by Choice:
Canada's Importation of Child Labourers between the 1830's and 1940's**

Course: HIS (Course number)

Submitted to: Professor (Professor's Name)

Submitted by: Student Name (+ Student Number)

Date: (Submission Date)

“Outcasts, street waifs, “children of vicious and criminal tendencies,” and the “offal of the most deprived characters...of the Old Country.”¹ Such was the language used in newspapers, trade union reports, and even the Canadian Parliament toward the end of the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries to describe British pauper children who had been brought to Canada as apprentices and indentured as domestic servants and agricultural labourers. This episode in Canadian history wherein children – and British children at that, not any of the ethnic groups typically hailed as inassimilable – became the target of hostility, is one that was largely disregarded in Canadian historiography until Joy

Parr's 1977 Yale University dissertation which brought attention to the fact that many Canadians are descended from young children removed from their surroundings in Britain and sent to work in Canada.² Since then, other historians have published works that explored the juvenile immigrant movement and the conditions under which these children lived and worked.³

This essay explores the factors that motivated Canadians to import more than 100,000 British pauper children as indentured labourers between 1830 and 1940. It argues that Canada's practice of importing young labourers was the combined results of Britain's attempts to deal with its poor and Canada's labour needs. Changing public perceptions of childhood eventually led to the demise of the practice.

¹ "Editorial," *Toronto News*, 6 May 1884, A2, Canada, House of Commons. "Report of the Select Standing Committee on Agriculture and Colonisation of the House of Commons," *Journals*, (1888): 10.

² Joy Parr, *The Home Children: British Juvenile Immigration to Canada, 1868-1924*, (PhD diss., Yale University, 1977), iv.

³ Major works include Joy Parr, *Labouring Children, British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1868-1924* (London: Croom Helm, 1994); Kenneth Bagnell, *The Little Immigrants: The Orphans Who Came to Canada* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1980); and Roy Parker, *Uprooted: The Shipment of Poor Children to Canada, 1867-1917* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

Advocacy for formally organizing the emigration of destitute children from Britain began before 1830. In 1826, Robert Chambers, a London police magistrate, appeared before a British Parliament Select Committee convened to address the broader issue of emigration. As a key witness, Chambers declared that London had become overrun with beggar children and that the best solution was to send them to Canada. He stated that

children who [are] down and out, those twelve years of age and upward, should be sent to Canada, where they [are] badly needed, to be apprenticed to persons who...would be glad to receive them as workers on the land.¹⁰

Chambers' testimony was supported by others who also believed in the great public benefit of emigrating homeless boys.

By the 1830s, several private agencies, notably the Society for the Suppression of Juvenile Vagrancy (renamed the Children's Friend Society in 1834), were already providing training to children and sending them as apprentices to Canadian farms.¹¹ The mission of the Society was to rescue poor

children from their negative urban environments and provide them with “useful, healthy, and profitable employment.”¹² Although the British Colonial Office opposed efforts to organise child emigration on an official basis, the Society sent 141 child apprentices to Upper and Lower Canada between 1833 and 1836. As debates about child emigration persisted in the British Parliament over the next decade, private agencies continued to train and equip poor children for the colonies.

¹⁰ Bagnall, *Little Immigrants*, 23.

¹¹ Gail H. Corbett, *Barnardo Children in Canada* (Peterborough, ON: Woodland Publishing, 1981), 23.

¹² Charlotte Neff, “The Children’s Friend Society in Upper Canada, 1833-1837,” *Journal of Family History* 32, 32 no. 3 (July 2007), 235. doi: 10.1177/03631999007299906.

Small numbers of child labourers were sent through various organisations until the late 1860s, most often at the request of Canadian emigration agents or provincial governments in Upper and Lower Canada and the Maritimes. By the late 1860s, the level of support in Canada for the movement had increased. Prominent officials and citizens from many towns assisted the philanthropic organisations by providing homes for distribution centres. For example, the mayor and a justice of the peace in Niagara-on-the-Lake supported Rye’s purchase of an old court house and jail.³⁷ Belleville’s Mayor and city council donated a home to Macpherson,³⁸ while the citizens of Galt gave her a farm and land and the family of Mr Justice Dunkin – Minister of Agriculture from 1869 to 1871 – raised half the funds to purchase a home in Knowlton, Quebec.³⁹

Similarly, Sir George Cox, president of Midland Railway Company and later a Liberal Senator, donated the home “Hazel Brae” rent-free to Barnardo in Peterborough, Dr. Morley Punshon, a Methodist minister, bought a home in Hamilton for Stephenson, and William Gooderham, a wealthy Toronto citizen, gave Fegan a distributing home.⁴⁰ Sir Charles Tupper, the Canadian High Commissioner in London, assisted Barnardo to get a 2,800 hectare industrial farm in Manitoba in 1887.⁴¹

³⁷ Kohli, *Golden Bridge*, 72.

³⁸ When the home burned down in 1872, City Council offered another house rent and tax free for 3 years; local citizens furnished the home and took in the children. Wagner, *Children of Empire*, 66-67.

³⁹ Ibid, 68-69. The Province of Quebec granted the remaining funds for the Knowlton purchase.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 104.

⁴¹ Dr. Barnardo wrote to Tupper asking the Canadian government to grant him good land near Winnipeg for a farm training school plus railway transportation from all ports of entry to Winnipeg. LAC, RG17, Agriculture, Volume 411, Docket 44833, 26 June 1884. Tupper suggested that Barnardo contact the President of the CPR. Ibid, 11 July 1884. The Manitoba and Northwest Railway granted land to Barnardo. Ibid, RG17, Agriculture, Volume 487, Docket 53503, 3 June 1886.

18. Example of Plagiarism

Original text:

Bad winters remained a serious cause of distress in London up until the middle of the 1890s. There were harsh winters in 1879, 1880, 1881, 1886, 1887, 1891, and lastly in 1895 when once again the Thames was immobilized by floating blocks of ice. The distress in that year was sufficient to merit a Parliamentary commission of inquiry into the causes of the distress. This concluded that severe winters did not merely result in the unemployment of riverside and building workers, but also extended distress into all trades which depended upon the work of wives and daughters to sustain the unemployed husband through the slack season. Wives engaged in sweated homework tended only to work when their husbands were unemployed. The effect of bad weather was to push many more wives than usual into the labour market, and the result of this heightened competition was to spread the effects of the distress into groups of workers not directly affected by climatic conditions.⁴

Plagiarism:

In the 1880s and 1890s, London experienced a series of harsh winters which caused serious distress in the city. Floating blocks of ice blocked the Thames, increasing unemployment among riverside and building workers. More wives than usual were pushed into the labour market, increasing the competition for work and spreading distress among workers not directly affected by the bad weather.⁵

In this case, the borrowed words are merely shuffled around.

Proper use:

The economic structure of London was such that until the 1890s, bad winters had repercussions for the working classes of the entire city. When the Thames was closed to river traffic by ice, not only were the dock workers out of work, but their wives were obligated to enter the labour market in order to supplement the household income. The sudden glut of presumably cheap labour caused problems for many of the city's workers.⁶

Learn more about [effective paraphrasing](#) from Purdue University.

Learn more about [types of plagiarism](#) from Northern Illinois University.

PART IV
SUMMARY CHECKLISTS

19. Research

The following checklist is designed to guide you through each of the items related to researching an essay.

Component	Item	Questions / Issues
Defining a topic and thesis	Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does your topic fit within the scope of your course?
	Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is your topic focused enough to be both feasible and manageable?
	Research question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does your thesis statement ask a how or why type of question?
	Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is your thesis statement specific, explanatory, and argumentative?
	Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have a sufficient mix of books, journal articles, and/or other types of material?
Building a bibliography	Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you checked that your sources are accurate / acceptable? Are some of your secondary sources recent?
	Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do your notes record where you found your research material?
Taking notes	Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do your notes indicate whether you wrote them in your own words or whether you copied them exactly from the source material?
	Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did you keep your notes?

20. Presentation and writing

The following checklist is designed to guide you through each of the items related to essay presentation and writing.

Formatting

- **Title Page:** Does the title clearly reflect the essay topic (what, where, when)? Is the title page formatted correctly?
- **Mechanics:**
 - Did you use standard 2.5 cm (1 inch) margins and double spacing?
 - Did you use a standard font size (12 point)?
 - Are quotations properly formatted (short and long)?
 - Are footnotes placed appropriately (end of sentences or after quotes)?
 - Numbering: Did you clearly number each page in your essay?
- **Footnotes:** Are the footnotes formatted correctly?
- **Bibliography:** Is the bibliography formatted correctly? Is there a sufficient mix of appropriate books and scholarly articles?

Structure and Argument

- **Outline:** Is your paper clearly outlined and focused?
- **Introduction:**
 - Does your introduction properly situate the topic (meaning, does it answer the questions who, what, where, when, and why)?
 - Does it give a sense of the topic's importance?
 - Is the questions / thesis clearly stated? Is the introduction concise?
- **Use of evidence:**
 - Are generalizations sufficiently supported?
 - Is the evidence that is used relevant to your argument?
- **Quotations:** Are quotations integrated into the text to support and illustrate your argument? Do not overuse them as this detracts from your argument.
- **Conclusion:**
 - Are your main arguments summarized?
 - Do you discuss the implications of your research and / or where more is needed?

Writing Style

- **Spelling:** Did you run a spell check? Make sure to proof read the essay as well.
- **Grammar:** Did you review for pronoun agreements, verb tense (use past tense for the past), use of commas, etc.? Proofread just for grammar traps.
- **Style:** Did you eliminate unnecessary words, repetition, empty sentences, and sentences that are too long? Do not use contractions in formal writing.
- **Paragraphs:**
 - Is there one topic per paragraph?
 - Is the transition / flow of ideas between paragraphs clear and logical?

21. Revising and Editing

Below are a number of simple questions to ask yourself as you revise and edit your essay.

Introduction: Do I set out the context of the topic (who, what, where) and explain the significance of the topic? Is my thesis statement or main question clearly indicated? Does my introduction reflect what I present in the paper?

Main Body: Do my paragraphs each address one idea that relates directly back to my thesis? Are my ideas and examples relevant? Do I include effective transitions between them? Are my paragraphs too short [less than 3 sentences] or too long [more a page]? Do I use effective and appropriate sources to prove my arguments? Do I have introductory and concluding sentences for each section?

Conclusion: Do I summarize (not repeat) my thesis and main arguments? Do I give my reader a final thought related to the topic? References: Do I provide references for all sentences or ideas taken from an outside source? Is my referencing style correct and consistent? Do I use quotes accurately and appropriately? Do I include all of my sources in my Bibliography?

Grammar and Spelling: Do I use formal (academic) vocabulary and avoid slang and biased vocabulary? Are my verb tenses (present/past) consistent and correct? Do I use commas, periods, colons, semi-colons, and apostrophes correctly? Is my spelling accurate? Are any of my sentences too short or too lengthy? Are my sentences complete ideas? Have I used ambiguous words such as “it”, “they” or “them”?

Advice for first-year students

This Guide gives you only a quick summary of some of the rules and techniques of writing history. You will learn much more when you take one of the required methodology courses (HIS 2100 The Historian's Craft, HIS 2391 History and Theory, or HIS 2390 Theory and Practice of Microhistory). Make certain that you take one of these courses by the end of your second year! If you have any difficulties (studying, grasping the material, writing, reading all the assigned material, debilitating stress, etc.) there are many services available to you to help you overcome these obstacles. It can happen that the first grade you receive in university will disappoint you. Do not let this discourage you! Some of the professors now teaching you had the same experience. The transition from High School to University level work can be difficult. Do not hesitate to go see your professor, and/or to call upon one of the services of SASS. Do not wait until it is too late in the semester to address your particular difficulty.

Advice for non-history majors and first-year history students

Keep in mind that history is not just about what happened in the past, but also about why things happened the way they did. A history paper is therefore not a "report" (summarizing a bunch of facts about the past), nor is it an opinion piece (you need proof for your hypothesis, like in the sciences). Simply put, you will need two things in your papers: an argument, and evidence to support that argument. See here for History-specific problems and tips. You may wonder why we historians require such a complicated footnoting system (Chicago style), as opposed to the simpler parenthetical system used in the social sciences (APA or MLA styles). The reason is simple: historians write on the basis of hundreds of archival documents. If we used the APA style, the source list could end up longer than the text.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M Williams, and Joseph Bizup, eds. [*The Craft of Research*](#), 4th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

[*Chicago Manual of Style Online*](#). 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Marrus, Richard and Melvin E. Page. [*A Short Guide to Writing about History*](#). 9th ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2015.

Robertson, Hugh. The [*Research Essay: A Guide to Essays and Papers*](#). 5th ed. Ottawa: Piperhill, 2001.

Storey, William Kelleher and Mairi Cowan. [*Writing History: A Guide for Canadian Students*](#). 5th ed. Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Tosh, John. The [*Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*](#). 5th ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2010.

Turabian, Kate, Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, and William T. FitzGerald. [*A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*](#). 9th edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018.

On-line resources

[Academic Help Writing Centre](#)

[History Research Guide \(Library\)](#)

Kreis, Steven. "A Student's Guide to the Study of History." Last revised January 3, 2020.

<http://www.historyguide.org/guide/guide.html> This online guide covers many topics not covered here, such as taking notes in class, writing short essays, studying for exams, etc.

Rael, Patrick. [Reading, Writing, and Researching for History: A Guide for College Students](#). Brunswick, Maine: Bowdoin College: 2004. This older guide remains very useful since it covers – in addition to the topics addressed in this Guide and the one mentioned above – reading primary and secondary sources.

American Library Association, Reference and User Services Association. [Primary Sources on the Web: Finding, Evaluating, Using](#).