Style guide for undergraduate & postgraduate essay & dissertation submission

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Introduction

When we read historical articles or books, it is of course the case that the originality of argument and persuasive use of evidence are important criteria for assessing quality. But it would be wrong to ignore the importance also of good style and presentation. Part of this is a matter of writing effectively – that is, ensuring that grammar and sentence structure are correct, spelling is as good as it can be, and that there are no typographical or editing glitches left in the final version (it is striking how often this is not the case, even in books from reputable publishers!). It is also important to try to write well – varying sentence length and structure, paragraphing effectively and employing a good vocabulary.¹

In comparison, matters of presentation in terms of formatting of page and text may seem comparatively trivial. But they are not. The aim of any writer is to communicate meaning as immediately and effectively to the reader as they can. Poor presentation can form a significant obstacle to communication. Get it right, and your reader will appreciate what you want to say readily and thank you for it; get it wrong, and they will resent the time wasted in trying to find their way round your text.

Acquiring good habits in such matters is a very valuable transferable skill which you can take away from a history degree to a wide range of potential careers which involve communicating with others. It is also a core skill for an apprentice historian.² The Department of History therefore attaches considerable significance to matters of presentation, and from the moment you begin your degree studies seeks to encourage you to acquire the relevant skills and habits so that you will be able to deploy them almost without thinking about it. When your work is assessed, presentation is taken into account, and shoddily presented work will be marked down accordingly; moreover, as already indicated, it is in any case likely to be less effective in getting its message across.

There are many different sets of conventions which govern academic referencing and presentation. Indeed, when a historian submits work to a journal or publisher, the e-learning platform from a computer. Dissertations are also required to submit for assessment. Moreover, in a system where students can be penalised for writing essays which exceed a prescribed word limit, it is necessary to insist on a shared referencing system to ensure parity: depending on the choice of referencing system made by an individual, a student could otherwise acquire or lose several hundred words with which to make their argument in the main text.

We therefore expect you to abide by these rules from the outset of your student career, and work which departs significantly from them may be penalised accordingly.

We strongly recommend that you download this style guide as a ready reference guide to keep near you as you produce work, whether for formative assessment or as part of body of work on which you are assessed for the degree.

Unless there are particular circumstances which make it appropriate to hand in handwritten work, such as a medical condition or a sudden failure of technology, your essay work will be submitted to the department as files uploaded to the e-learning platform from a computer. Dissertations are generally submitted in hard copy. The conventions set out below should be easily applied using most standard word-processing packages.

Arthur Burns, chair DTC April 2012.

¹ One of the best guides to look at here remains Fowler's Modern English Usage, most recently available as R.W. Burchfield, Fowler's Modern English Usage (Re-Revised 3rd Edition, Oxford, University Press, 2004). It is a good idea also to equip yourself with a good dictionary (such as Chambers). It is often easier to have a physical book to refer to on such matters when writing, rather than relying on internet resources on the screen on which you are writing!
² If you want to explore such issues beyond those set out here, a good place to look is The Oxford manual of style: The essential handbook for all writers, editors and publishers (Oxford, University Press, 2002).
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Presentation of the essay or dissertation

A: Document & page formatting

- ESSAYS AND SHORT ASSIGNMENTS
  1. The piece of work should be submitted as a Word, RTF or PDF file.
  2. Please ensure that PAGE NUMBERS are entered at the foot of each page.
  3. Follow instructions in the drop box on the e-learning site or in the dissertation handbook for the particular piece of work to be submitted on how to identify the work as yours. The TITLE OF THE ESSAY and – depending on the assignment – either your FULL NAME or your CANDIDATE (not Student) NUMBER should be included in the header of each page.
  4. Set adequate margins (of at least 2.5 cm on all sides).
  5. On the first page, begin with the question or the title of the piece of work, and if required give the WORD COUNT.
  6. Set annotation to NUMBERED FOOTNOTES not endnotes.

- DISSERTATIONS
  1. The word-processed dissertation should be submitted in hard copy.
  2. Two securely-held together copies of the dissertation are to be handed in. Dissertations can be bound by FedEx Kinko’s or Ryman’s on the Strand (we do not expect doctoral thesis binding quality!).
  3. Please ensure that PAGE NUMBERS are entered at the foot of each page of the dissertation.
  4. Set adequate margins (of at least 2.5 cm on all sides).
  5. Set annotation to NUMBERED FOOTNOTES not endnotes.
  6. Follow instructions regarding cover sheets. This should normally include:
     a. the title of the dissertation in full
     b. your CANDIDATE NUMBER (OBTAINABLE FROM myPage – NOT YOUR STUDENT NUMBER)
     c. the WORD COUNT.
  7. Ensure that your name does not appear anywhere in the dissertation.

B: Text formatting

1. Please use double line spacing for all main text (single spacing is acceptable in footnoting).
2. Please use a clear font in 12-point (e.g. Arial, Times New Roman) for both text and notes.
3. Align text to left (not full justification).
5. Quotations should be marked off with single quotation marks (‘) rather than double (“) which should be reserved for quotations within quotations. (eg: As Burns notes, “according to Carpenter, Magna Carta “does not say that either John or the barons swore to observe its terms.””) Lengthy quotations (say over 50 words in length) are best set off as indented text, in which case quotation marks are not needed.
6. Use superscript numbers to indicate footnote references.

C: Word count

1. Take note of any ruling about the word limit on the essay or dissertation. This should be indicated clearly (and honestly!) on the title page/coversheet.
2. The word length should be calculated to include all main text and footnotes, but not the title or the bibliography, or indeed the statement of word length! Images do not count towards the word tariff, but tables do.
3. In dissertations, where you wish to include appendices, these do not count if they provide illustrative reference material (e.g. the text of a charter crucial to the argument of an essay on an Anglo-Saxon topic) but should be part of the word count if they include substantive argument.
4. If using the word count facility in Word to calculate word length, it is important to check that it is set to include footnotes.

D: Bibliography

All essays or dissertations should be accompanied by a bibliography. This should include:

1. All items cited in the text through footnotes.
2. Any items which have you have read and which have informed the argument or the approach adopted.
3. It is not necessary to cite lectures or other forms of teaching unless a specific point is being referred to not available elsewhere (eg: a reference by a lecturer to a forthcoming unpublished work).
4. The bibliography should also include web resources, podcasts, film etc if cited in the essay/dissertation.
5. Organise the bibliography alphabetically, primarily by surname of author.
6. Each item should begin on a fresh line.
7. If the bibliography for an essay is short, all items should be grouped. However, in a dissertation or longer essay, it may be more appropriate to group items into primary and secondary sources.
8. A bibliography is often easier to follow if hanging indents are used at the start of each item, or a space is left between items.
9. For conventions on how to refer to individual items, see below, F.

E: Footnotes

1. These should appear at the bottom of the page, with numbers not symbols and continuously numbered (eg: not starting at ‘1’ on each page).
2. Avoid footnotes which contain significant elements in the argument or additional points unless absolutely necessary. Keep the notes for references.
3. For conventions on how to refer to individual items and layout see below, F.
4. Footnotes should be supplied for all direct quotations, and to indicate the source of arguments or evidence referred to in your own words in the main text.
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F: How to refer to different types of material in footnotes and the bibliography.

When you have completed your work it is always worth checking that you have formatted both bibliography and footnotes properly, and that everything referred to in the notes is actually present in the bibliography! There are important conventions about when to use italics or underlining in references (if italics are not available, underlining should be used as an alternative). In what follows we use the ‘short-title’ referencing system rather than the ‘author-date’ approach, as it is more readily accommodating to the kinds of primary sources you may well want to refer to in a history essay. We cannot cover every possible source you might wish to use, but the main types are discussed below. If in doubt, ask. For each type of material, we first indicate how to cite it in the bibliography, and then how to footnote it at first reference and then later references.

CITING E-RESOURCES

Much of the time you will need to cite books and journals which you have consulted in hard copy, but increasingly students access such material in electronic through resources such as JSTOR or ebooks. There is evidence of confusion among students about what to reference when these resources are used. For the purposes of essays or dissertations, we suggest you follow the following rule: Where a resource exists in both hardcopy and electronic form (eg: a book also available as a whole or a part in electronic form, or a journal accessible via JSTOR), cite the reference as if you had used the printed book or journal: after all, a reader may or may not have access to the same e-resources. Do not hyperlink such references, but give page references. Where you are using a resource only available in digital form, however, cite as indicated below under web-resources; and in the case of digitised collections of sources gathered from many physical repositories, you also need to indicate this. E-books accessed on Kindle present particular difficulties thanks to the absence of page numbers and the fact that readers can change the font size.

USING IBID., OP. CIT., IDEM etc.

These can often create confusion, so use with caution, especially if you are still inserting notes during editing. Do not use Op cit. Use Ibid. (meaning ‘the same’) only where you are citing a source which was cited on its own in the immediately preceding note. Similarly, use idem or eadem only to indicate that that the same author/s is/are responsible for an item as for the immediately preceding one. On the whole, avoid etc.

How to cite different types of text

1. Sole- and multi-authored books

Bibliography: references should take the form: Author surname [comma], author forename or initials [comma] Full title in italics, then [open parentheses] Place of publication [comma] date of publication [close parentheses].


Footnotes: First reference should give the following details: Author forename or initials and surname [comma] Full title in italics [open parentheses] Place of publication [comma] date of publication [close parentheses] page sequence or chapter number.

David Carpenter, The struggle for mastery: Britain 1066-1284 (Harmondsworth, 2004), ch. 4.

For subsequent references use short title form: Author surname [comma] Abbreviated title in italics [comma] page sequence or chapter number

eg: Burns, Diocesan revival, 24-7; Carpenter, Struggle for mastery, ch. 4.

Where a book is co-authored, or has more than one volume, deal with it as follows:


1. Sole- and multi-authored books

Bibliography: references should take the form: Author surname [comma], author forename or initials [comma] Full title in italics, then [open parentheses] Place of publication [comma] date of publication [close parentheses].


Footnotes: First reference should give the following details: Author forename or initials and surname [comma] Full title in italics [open parentheses] Place of publication [comma] date of publication [close parentheses] page sequence or chapter number.

David Carpenter, The struggle for mastery: Britain 1066-1284 (Harmondsworth, 2004), ch. 4.

For subsequent references use short title form: Author surname [comma] Abbreviated title in italics [comma] page sequence or chapter number

eg: Burns, Diocesan revival, 24-7; Carpenter, Struggle for mastery, ch. 4.

Where a book is co-authored, or has more than one volume, deal with it as follows:


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2. Articles in Journals [both hard copy and JSTOR etc.]

**Bibliography:** references should take the form: Author surname [comma], author forename or initials [comma] 'Title of article' [comma] *Title of journal in italics*, volume number of journal, then [open parentheses] Year of publication [close parentheses] [comma], page sequence.

eg:

**Footnotes:** For the first reference, give Author forename or initials and surname [comma] 'Title of article' [comma] *Title of journal in italics*, volume number of journal, then [open parentheses] Year of publication [close parentheses] [comma], page sequence or number(s).

eg:

For subsequent references, use a short title form: Author surname [comma], 'Short title of article', page reference.

eg:
Greenleaf, 'Toulmin Smith', 25; Bosher, 'Vancouver Island', 349.

If you refer to the same collection again with reference to another chapter or essay, you can employ a short title as you would for a book. For articles with multiple authors follow the style described under books above.

3. Essays/chapters in edited books

**Bibliography:** references should take the form: Author of essay surname [comma], author forename or initials [comma] 'Title of chapter/essay' [comma] in Editor's/s' name(s) (ed.) *Title of book in italics*, then [open parentheses] Place of publication [comma] date of publication [close parentheses] [comma], page sequence.

eg:

**Footnotes:** For the first reference, give Author forename or initials and surname [comma] 'Title of article/chapter' [comma] in Editors names (ed.), *Full title of book in italics*, then [open parentheses] Place of publication [comma] date of publication [close parentheses] [comma], page sequence or number(s).

eg:
Arthur Burns, 'A Hanoverian legacy? Diocesan reform in the Church of England, c. 1800-1833', in John Walsh,

4. Edited text

For example, an edition of a medieval cartulary, a modern edition of a contemporary novel, or published reproduction of a diary with notes and commentary. These may or may not have an original author as well as an editor. The key point is that in these cases the editor follows the title, not precedes it as in the case of an editor of a collection of historical essays. Edited texts are often published in a record series and in collected volumes, and this should also be recorded by adapting the form used for books as follows

**Bibliography:** eg:

**Footnotes:** At first citation treat in a way parallel to articles above – eg:
The letters of Edward Copleston, bishop of Llandaff 1828-1849, ed. Roger Lee Brown (South Wales Record Society, xvii, 2003), 244.

Thereafter use a short-title form:

5. Unpublished theses/dissertations

Treat much like a book, only the title appears in quotation marks not italics as unpublished, and the University is given instead of place of publication and publisher.

**Bibliography:** eg:

**Footnotes:** First mention:

Thereafter use short title form:
Stockwell, 'British business', 35.
6. Manuscript sources (in archives)

In manuscript references, it is important to describe the location of the manuscript physically if it is in an archive, and to give the reader as much help as possible in locating the place in the manuscript(s) where a quote is found.

**Bibliography:** In a bibliography, manuscript sources are often listed in groups under the name of the repository where they are located. The repository name is followed by the collection name and/or catalogue reference, and the name (if any) of the manuscript.

eg:
- Bodleian Library, Oxford, Ms Add. c 290, 'The principal clergy of London classified according to their opinions on the great church questions of the day'

**Footnotes:** Where you are citing many manuscripts from one repository, or simply making repeated references to one manuscript source, it makes sense to use the first citation to establish a suitable abbreviation for the repository. A first such reference might thus read:

British Library, London [hereafter BL], Add. Ms 10564, fos 6-7, Robert Peel to Benjamin Disraeli, 1 June 1845.

A subsequent reference might read:

BL, Add. Ms. 10564, fo. 1, B Disraeli to R. Peel, 29 Mar. 1841.

7. Web resources

Increasingly, students make use of a wide range of online resources. Sometimes, as already indicated, this is simply a matter of using an online version of a resource also in print, such as a journal, in which pagination and volume numbers are reproduced online, and here it is important to give a reference to the 'original' – thus the English Historical Review, rather than JSTOR. On the other hand, many other web resources are constantly changing or may indeed disappear suddenly, and in these cases it is important to record when you consulted them, as well as what is consulted. Many web resources offer a downloadable citation, but these are often clumsy and very long and work better as hyperlinks than as records on a printed page. Following the guidance below is therefore generally preferable.

i) Online database

Good examples here are Old Bailey Online, or Clergy of the Church of England Database, where you may want to reference a specific document or record.

**Bibliography:** record the resource and the URL – eg:

- The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835 ([http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk](http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk))
- Old Bailey Proceedings Online ([http://www.oldbaileyonline.org](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org))

**Footnote:** Note how the site itself suggests referencing – eg:

*First mention:* Clergy of the Church of England Database ([www.theclergydatabase.org.uk](http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk), accessed 15 June 2011) [hereafter CCEd], CCEd person ID 243578.


*Thereafter:* CCEd, CCEdid13450; OBPO, Dec. 1714, trial of (t17141209-18).

ii) Webpages/articles

Such as Wikipedia (though we are not suggesting that Wikipedia is often a good source, it is a useful reminder of the instability of websites, for the continual re-editing makes the access date very significant).

**Bibliography:** eg:


**Footnote:** eg:


8. Newspapers and contemporary serial publications

Although you may access them through a digital resource, cite the actual newspapers (but indicate the use of the resource to access them in a note in the bibliography).

**Bibliography:** Simply cite the title of the newspaper or serial, although with the more generic it is worth giving a place of publication: eg:

- *The Times*
- *The Morning Star* (Leeds)
- *Edinburgh Review*

**Footnotes:** Cite the issue by date, and give a page number; named articles can also be mentioned and in serials include volume number. (Note that *The Times* keeps its definite article in notes, whereas other newspapers lose it.) eg:

*The Times*, 1 Oct. 1797, 5.

*Morning Post*, 4 June 1801, 4, letter from 'Civitas'.


9. Film, TV and radio

In the case of film both bibliographic and initial footnote references can take the same form, with suitable short titles following:

*This is Spinal Tap: A Rockumentary by Marti de Bergi*, dir. Rob Reiner (Embassy Pictures, 1983).


In the case of TV and radio programmes, it may be important to specify the date of first broadcast, although in
other cases, where a DVD is available, for example, it may not be necessary unless relevant to the argument. ‘Death on the Rock’, This Week (Thames Television), first shown ITV 28 Apr. 1988. Newsnight, BBC2, 15 June 2010.

10. Pictures and objects in galleries and museums
The key thing is to identify the object and location precisely: a famous work may need no more than the artist (if known), title and location; one coin among thousands may need a catalogue reference.

eg:

11. Plays, poetry, the Bible, Classical or medieval works
Texts such of these are often available in a myriad of editions with different pagination. However, they also have a long tradition of critical commentary in which reference can be made precisely using such features as cantos, line numbers, scenes and verses. Unless you are making a point about something only revealed in a particular edition, it can therefore be most helpful to identify a reference in a work like this using the features common to all editions in the footnotes (you can cite the actual edition you used in the bibliography). In classical or medieval works, different authors have different conventions: best to follow those used in the work itself before you.

eg:
Bible: Eccles. 12: 12 (= Book of Ecclesiasticus, chapter 12, verse 12.)
Poetry: Edmund Spenser, Faerie Queene II. vii. xxxv 7. (= Book 2, canto 6, stanza 35, line 7)
Play: William Shakespeare, 2 Henry IV, IV. ii. 86 (= Act 4, scene 2, line 86).
Classical or medieval work (e.g.): Aristotle, Politics, i. 2. 1253a (= book 1, chapter 2, Bekker number 1253a)

12. E-books
The formatting of text on e-books varies considerably. In some cases you are offered a virtual printed book, perhaps produced by pdf style reproduction of the original (often the case on Google books). In these instances, citation should follow normal practice using page numbers and the correct publication data for the original publication, while making it plain the item was cited via an ebook resource.

eg:
Bibliography:
Hibbert, Samuel. The ancient parish church of Manchester and why it was collegiated (Manchester, 1848; acc. Google books).

Footnotes:
First mention: Samuel Hibbert, The ancient parish church of Manchester and why it was collegiated (Manchester, 1848; acc. Google books), 54.
Thereafter: Hibbert, Ancient parish church, 54.

For a book accessed by Kindle, the lack of page references and the variable format causes additional difficulties. There are also many open-access versions of classic texts available which have minimal publication data which may make it difficult for a reader to identify the text used. Until a more satisfactory referencing system is produced, our strong advice is to seek out a hard copy of the text cited in the library for the actual footnote reference even if you actually consulted the work as a ebook. If this is impossible, then the following rather cumbersome unsatisfactory model is all we can suggest:

Find the passage to be cited and highlight it on the Kindle. Save the highlight, and then look this up on the saved highlights. This will give you a location number for the text you have cited. Use this together with the lowest level descriptor (eg chapter, section, part etc) available to identify the passage. As Kindle books do not have a place of publication, in this case alone give the publisher if there is one.

eg:
Bibliography:

Footnotes
Later references: Dikotter, Mao’s great famine, ch. 3, locs. 46-7.