

Writing History Extended Essays

Summary

- First ask yourself: ‘What is the question actually asking?’
- Take relevant notes as you read. Remember to note the necessary bibliographical information from each text. Try to take notes mainly in your own words. Taking quotes should be done sparingly and **MUST** be accurate – **beware of plagiarism.**
- Plan your essay’s argument – give your essay a logical structure that develops the points you wish to make.
- Write a draft and take time to improve the final product.
- Your essay should have a proper structure. This includes an introduction, a main body and a conclusion made up of sensible sentences and paragraphs. Please avoid using personal pronouns (I, me, my etc.) in your essay.
- Hand your work in on time.
- It is recommendable to read your essay aloud to ensure it makes sense.
- Footnotes are used to show your use of evidence. You should footnote quotes, figures and statistics, and when summarising factual material or another author’s opinion or argument.
- Your bibliography lists all the relevant sources you have read to construct your essay.
- Your essay should be double spaced, with a 1 inch (2.5 cm) wide margins, paragraphs indented or spaced, each page numbered (top right) and with your name on it (use headers or footers).

Planning your essay

Make an outline plan. After you have done your investigation it is a good idea make a rough plan for how you intend to proceed. This may change as you develop each point, but it helps to keep your essay coherent and focused.

Introduction. An introduction is a clear statement of your essay’s argument and any conclusions you have come to regarding the question. After reading your introduction the marker should have a clear idea of how you intend to argue your points.

Oftentimes, the introduction is written **after** you have written the main body of your essay, and often after you have written the conclusion. This ensures that your introduction covers what you actually argue, not what you originally *intended* to argue!

The Main Body. The body of your essay provides the in-depth argument and analysis of your essay. Ensure you write in complete sentences and paragraphs. Each paragraph should relate to one major idea or a group of lesser related ideas.

If you think of a paragraph as a mini-essay this can help with your structure. The first sentence states the topic (like an introduction), then further sentences develop that argument and support it with evidence. The final sentence brings closure to the idea (like a conclusion). The ending sentence of each paragraph should connect in some way with the introductory sentence of the next paragraph so that the essay feels like a coherent piece of writing, not a cluster of separate ideas.

In practice this arrangement of sentences in a paragraph is much more flexible, and rigidly following such a structure could make your essay somewhat dull, but the key elements are important to keep in mind.

Conclusion. Your conclusion should be one of the last things you write. It is a summary of your argument and is closely related to your introduction, however should not be the same. A useful question to ask when considering your conclusion is ‘**So What?**’ You have just spent an essay developing an argument - what you have achieved? Can your essay be a starting point for future research? What do your findings say about the current world? Try to make your conclusion mean something more than your introduction.

Essay style

- Do not use contractions: use *cannot* or *do not* rather than *can't* and *don't*
- Do not use abbreviations or symbols: write *example* rather than *e.g.* or *percent* rather than %
- Do not use pronouns in your essay: it is better to use neutral phrases such as “it is clear” or “it follows” rather than “I think” or “in my opinion”. As you wrote the essay it is obviously what you think, so this does not need to be made obvious by using personal pronouns.
- Apostrophes: are only used to indicate possession and contractions (*not* to make a word plural). As indicated above, contractions are not used in formal essays therefore you should only use apostrophes if you are indicating possession.

For example:

The dress of the girl becomes *The girl's dress*

Please note: All of these words DO NOT have apostrophes:

his hers theirs ours yours its (*it's* is a contraction of *it is* or *it has*)

- Parentheses, also known as brackets: should be used sparingly. If you are considering using parentheses decide whether the information is important enough to include. If so, try to rephrase so that you do not need to use parentheses. If not, then delete it.
- Foreign words: do not translate well known terms such as *raison d'être*, *coup d'état*, *Realpolitik*. Foreign words should be put in italics.
- Avoid colloquial expressions.
- Quotations: use these sparingly. Quotations must be accurate. Reproduce the words, spelling, capitalisation and punctuation of your source **exactly**. It is assumed all quotes are reproduced accurately, but if you want to stress that any mistake or error is not yours you can place the word ‘sic’ in square brackets immediately after the incorrect item. Note that as ‘sic’ is a Latin word (meaning ‘thus’) it must be italicised.

For example: “The dynamic relationship between leadership and society [*sic*] can be seen in the attitude of the elected leader towards the citizenry.”

Occasionally you may need to add your own words or letters to a quotation in order to make it fit within your essay. This should also be done sparingly (try to change your sentence to make it fit naturally without amendments if possible), but when needed you can add in your own words within square brackets.

For example: “[After World War One] it was assumed that the world would never again be involved in conflict of that magnitude.”

It is important that when you add words you do not alter the meaning of the quote.

For example: in the above quote it would be unacceptable to say “[After World War Two] it was assumed that the world would never again be involved in conflict of that magnitude.”

Quotations should be put within quotation marks. Remember to open and close them. Punctuation usually goes outside the quotation marks. If you use a long quotation (which is not usually advisable) then you should indent the quotation, make the font slightly smaller, and omit the quotation marks.

- Stay within the word limit. Remember that sometimes less is more, since it forces you to be concise and to the point. Extended Essay Word limit is 4000 words. *You should try to keep your EE length to be no shorter than 3200 words and no more than 3800.*

Footnotes and Bibliography

Footnotes are numbered references that point from a particular sentence (or sentences) of your essay to the location of the sources of your direct quotations, figures and statistics, factual material, and ideas or arguments that you have taken from other authors.

Footnotes are important to master as they represent expertise, rigour and accuracy in your use of evidence.

Your footnote number will go at the end of a sentence (using an MSWord document you can do this automatically by going to 'Insert', 'Reference', 'Footnote'. I'm sure there is a similar function on Macs). That number will refer to another number listed at the bottom of the page. Next to this number you will include the details of your source for the information. There is a specific format for doing this, and you will probably see a few variations of this. Choose the format that is most logical to you but make sure that it is **clear** and **consistent** throughout your whole essay.

A common format is Chicago:

¹Gary Kates, *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 2.

In other words:

¹Firstname Surname, *Title of book* (Place of publication: Publishing company, Year of publication), Page number.

The bibliography is a list at the end of your essay (usually on a separate page) that lists all the books you used in your research. The major difference between how a bibliography is structured and how a footnote is structured is that the author's name is listed surname first in the bibliography. The bibliography is then listed in alphabetical order by surname.

For example:

Kates, Gary, *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

Kelly, Alfred H., 'American Political Leadership: The Optimistic Ethical World View and the Jeffersonian Synthesis', in *Leadership in the American Revolution* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1974).

Referencing websites is similar but requires additional information.

For example:

Davison, Graeme, 'On History and Hypertext', *Electronic Journal of Australian and New Zealand History*; available from <http://www.jcu.edu.ac/aff/history/new.htm>; accessed on 19 August 1997.