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Mr. Barge, Principal Ms. Rubin, Teacher

**Essay Writing Tips**

**DO NOT**

1. *First Person* – No  I, we, us, you, your, our, etc.

2. *Passive Voice* – No questions and no helping verbs

Example: Passive Voice: The new policy was approved by the executive committee.

Active Voice: The executive committee approved the new policy.

3. *Informal* – Contractions (can’t should be cannot, don’t should be do not)

4. *Colloquial* (gonna, dunno, idk)

**DO**

1. *Thesis* – Last sentence of first paragraph (introduction)

2. *Transitional phrases*- However, Thus, Consequently, Furthermore, Additionally, Nevertheless, etc.

3. *Counter Argument* – Prove how arguments against your thesis are wrong.

**Essay Organization**

An essay is not simply a list of facts. You must organize the facts into themes, which support a central argument or thesis. This thesis should be introduced in the beginning of the paper and developed throughout the paper one step at a time. The stronger your thesis, the easier it will be for you to develop a strong argument. Use an outline to organize your thoughts in a clear, coherent and logical manner and to guide you in writing the essay. Organizationally, the essay has three main parts:

1. Introduction - Use the introduction to state your thesis, outline the main points you will make in the essay, and describe the conclusions which you will draw in the essay. History essays are not mystery papers; the reader should know from the beginning what your conclusions are. Use the introduction to draw the reader into the essay. Often it is easier to write your introduction *last*, after you clearly know what arguments you develop in the essay.

2. Body - The body is the bulk of your paper, the place where you present your facts and develop your thoughts and arguments. The body can be developed chronologically, thematically, geographically, or in any number of ways, but you must make it clear how you are approaching and organizing the material. While you write the essay, keep in mind the following points:

Write in paragraphs. Each paragraph is a unit of thought limited to one major idea. Each paragraph should relate to and support your thesis or central argument. Use specific and concrete examples to support your general statements. Be sure your facts are correct and that they support your argument.

Use good grammar. This includes writing in complete sentences, using past tense instead of present tense when appropriate, using active verbs instead of passive ones, varying your vocabulary, and avoiding sexist language (i.e.--don't use the generic "he" or talk about the history of *man* when you mean the history of humans or people.

* + Write analytically, not descriptively. Do not just explain *what* happened, but also try to explain *why* it happened and why it is significant. Facts are important, but without interpretation they become meaningless. There are no correct answers - rather, it is more important that you are able to use the material to develop an argument, which supports your point of view.
  + 3. Conclusion - The conclusion can be as simple as a restatement of your introduction. It should emphasize your thesis, and briefly summarize how you have proven it in the body of the paper. In this way, your paper is cyclical--you end up where you started. You can also use the conclusion to state your own interpretations, to assess and argue with the material you have read, and to point to gaps in our historical knowledge.

(http://www.history.vt.edu/undergraduate/research\_paper.htm)

**Citations and Bibliography**

**MLA**

For MLA the bibliography and work cited page are the same thing. Therefore, you only need one. Citations are placed in parenthesis inside the text of the paper. Nothing should be numbered. Instead list items alphabetically according to last name. If there is no author, put those items at the end and organize them according to title.

ALWAYS REMOVE HYPERLINKS FROM WEBSITES.

MLA Bibliography

* Books

Author. Title of Book. City of Publication: Publisher, Year.

* Magazine

Author. "Title of Article." Title of Magazine. Date: Page(s).

* Journal Articles

Author. "Title of Article." Title of Journal, Volume number (Year): Page(s).

* Newspaper

Author. "Title of Article." Name of Newspaper. Date, edition: Page(s).

* Website

Complete publication information may not be available for a Web site; provide what is given, but always include the entire internet site.

Author. "Title of Web Page." Title of the Site. Editor. Date and/or Version Number. Name of Sponsoring Institution. Date of Access <URL>.

* Online Articles

Author. "Title of Article." Title of Publication. Date: Page(s) or Section(s), if numbered. Date of Access <URL>.

MLA Citations (Parenthetical)

* Books (if you have multiple authors with the same last name use the first initial as well)

(Author’s name page number).

If the work you are making reference to has no author, use an abbreviated version of the work's title. For non-print sources, such as films, TV series, pictures, or other media, or electronic sources, include the name that begins the entry in the Works Cited page.

* Quotations

Place quotations longer than four typed lines in a free-standing block of typewritten lines, and omit quotation marks. Start the quotation on a new line, indented one inch from the left margin, and maintain double-spacing. Your parenthetical citation should come after the closing punctuation mark. When quoting verse, maintain original line breaks. (You should maintain double-spacing throughout your essay.)

* Website

Include in the text the first item that appears in the Work Cited entry that corresponds to the citation (e.g. author name, article name, website name, film name).

APA Bibliography

Your list of works cited should begin at the end of the paper on a new page with the centered title, *References*. Alphabetize the entries in your list by the author's last name, using the letter-by-letter system (ignore spaces and other punctuation.) Only the initials of the first and middle names are given. If the author's name is unknown, alphabetize by the title, ignoring any *A, An*, or *The*. ALWAYS REMOVE HYPERLINKS FROM WEBSITES.

* Books

If there is more than one author put them in alphabetical order

Author's last name, first initial. (Publication date). *Book title*. Additional information. City of publication: Publishing company.

* Newspapers and Magazines

Author's last name, first initial. (Publication date). Article title. *Periodical title, volume number(issue number if available)*, inclusive pages.

* Website

Author's name. (Date of publication). *Title of work*. Retrieved month day, year, from full URL

**APA**

In APA style, in-text citations are placed within sentences and paragraphs so that it is clear what information is being quoted or paraphrased and whose information is being cited.

(Author’s last name, publishing year)

When a work has two authors, always cite both names every time the reference occurs in the text. In parenthetical material join the names with an ampersand (&).

When a work has no author, use the first two or three words of the work's title as your text reference, capitalizing each word. Place the title in quotation marks if it refers to an article, chapter of a book, or Web page. Italicize the title if it refers to a book, periodical, brochure, or report.

**Useful Websites**

* http://www.easybib.com
* http://www.bibme.com