

WRITING THE PAPER

There are several steps that can improve the quality of your final draft.

1. Include all necessary citations. (See the manual section on “Documentation . . . When?” and “Documentation . . . how?” to document)
2. Quotations are an important element in a historical research paper. However, they should be used *selectively*. Quotes emphasize important points or include distinctive wording from important speakers. They should not be used on material that can be easily paraphrased. Over-use or under-use of quotations can damage the validity and effectiveness of an argument. Also, be sure to *always introduce the speaker of the quotation*.
3. Historical writing should always be in objective, formal, 3rd person narrative. No: I/we/us, instead use: he/she/it/they/one. Also, keeping your tenses consistent throughout the text is very important.
4. Avoid over-generalized wording. For example: always, never, none, nothing, all, and similar terms are problematic because they are just too sweeping. It is better to use qualifiers such as: often, rarely, almost, few, mostly and other such words that allow for exceptions.
5. Be aware of chronology. Some events occurred before other events. Also be aware of how things change over time. Be prepared to clarify why some situations changed and others did not.
6. Avoid slang words and contractions. Impress your reader.
7. Proofread very carefully. Stylistic and grammatical errors diminish the quality of your paper and distract the reader. Take advantage of the available resources: SSRC, ERC, library staff, adult editors, peer editors, computerized grammar and spelling checks, or Special Education staff.
8. Draft, draft, and re-draft! Editing and rewriting clarify thought and help improve your prose.
9. Be sure to check that you have not left off a vital component of a quality research paper. Including:
 - a. Title Page
 - b. Notecards
 - c. Outline
 - d. Citations
 - e. Bibliography/Works Cited

Check with your individual instructor for other required elements and remember to floss each night after brushing. 😊