Style Guide

History at Lincoln

January 2018
Professional and appropriate presentation of written work is extremely important in the majority of post-university careers. You can have the best ideas in the world, but if you can’t communicate them clearly and appropriately, you undermine all of your hard work. There are many different expectations and conventions, which vary according to the purpose of any given document. This guide will help you to present your essays and dissertations to conform with academic requirements in History at Lincoln.
1. General presentation

Please:
* Word process all work which is not submitted under exam conditions and submit it via Turnitin, unless you have permission to do otherwise
* If asked to print copies out as well, use A4 paper
* Use one side of the paper only
* Insert page numbers
* Include the assessment title at the top of the first sheet
* Use 12 point font in the main body of the essay, and 10 point font for footnotes
* Acceptable fonts are legible and clear to read, examples include: Times New Roman, Calibri, Arial, Tahoma, Helvetica or Verdana. No Comic Sans
* Do not use single spacing except for footnotes and long quotes (see below). The main body of your work should be in 1.5- or double-spacing
* Leave margins of 2.54 centimetres on both sides
* Include footnotes and a bibliography (see further below)
* Indent all paragraphs following the first

Quotations – if you are inserting quotations from a primary or secondary source follow these rules
* All quotes should be in ‘single inverted commas’
* Quotes within quotes should use “speech marks”
* Long quotes of more than three lines should be 0.5 indented at both sides, single spaced and not be enclosed in commas or speech marks

Numbers and Dates
* Centuries are ‘nineteenth and twentieth’ not 19th and 20th
* Dates given in the main body of the text should read 19 May 1980 (in that order), not the 19th of May 1980
* Finally, use numerals to express any number above nineteen (if a quantity or age, for example), but write any numbers lower than twenty that So:
  ‘By the age of nineteen David Thomspoon was already the chair of his local branch of Mensa.’

But
‘Records from the late twentieth century show that on at least 20 different occasions the staff at the University had attempted to explain the use of numbers in text.’

But note that this does NOT apply to centuries (as above).
Stick to the word limit
Unless otherwise stated, the word count should include footnotes, but exclude title and bibliography. In most cases, brevity is its own penalty, but an essay which exceeds the set word limit almost always does so because of evident poor time management and/or sloppy editing.

Always allow yourself time to read and edit your work
It’s at this point that you’ll notice weaknesses in your argument, elements which need further work, “flabby” prose, and passages where you aren’t quite saying what you thought you were. This leads to...
2. Prose, grammar, etc.

Communication of your ideas is a fundamentally important element of a history degree. You can have the best ideas in the world, but if you can’t communicate them appropriately, you’re undermining the value of those ideas. **Employers tend to value history graduates because they have been trained in communicating, so an essay is a valuable opportunity to hone your communication skills!** We don’t, of course, expect you to instantly write prose worthy of international literary awards, but you must try to write in clear English, using correct punctuation and grammatically correct sentences and paragraphs. This is not, it’s true, always easy, but it is a skill which is worth developing. Peck and Coyle’s comment on the apostrophe stands for grammar and punctuation in general: they are ‘like good manners and smart appearance; they might not be all that important in themselves, but they could be the things that made the crucial difference if you were applying for a job’.1 It’s as difficult to get a really good mark for a really poorly presented essay as it would be to get a job if you were to wear a scruffy tracksuit and pick your nose throughout your interview. Neither is completely impossible, but why would you want to set yourself at a disadvantage when it could easily be avoided?

If you know that grammar and punctuation are particularly problematic for you, there are many guides in the library which will help you. Browse the shelves to see which cover areas on which you need help. The following may be good starting points:


These books, as well as many which are near them on the shelves of the library, are also worth browsing for tips on how to construct arguments and essays. Good starting points are:


There are also a series of marvellous exercises available here: [http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/exercises/grammar/grammar_tutorial/](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/exercises/grammar/grammar_tutorial/)

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2.1 Some common errors to avoid

* Contractions
i.e. a shortened version of a word or words, in which the contraction is indicated by an apostrophe, e.g. *didn’t*, *can’t*, *wouldn’t*, etc. These are too colloquial for an academic essay (unless you are directly quoting a text which includes them). You may have noticed that I’ve used them in this guide, but this guide is deliberately less formal than an academic essay needs to be.

* Random apostrophes
This is a horribly common affliction in people of all ages, but is actually very easy to avoid. Apostrophes are used in two ways: (1) to indicate possession; or (2) to indicate the omission of one or more letters. Thus, for example, *the king’s teeth* (1); *I won’t do it* (2). As noted above, you should not use contractions in essays, so we can ignore (2) and focus on (1).

Many believe that adding ’s makes a word plural – hence the clichéd “greengrocers’ apostrophe”, which gives us *tomato’s*, or *apple’s* (which should be *tomatoes* and *apples*). Instead, ‘s denotes possession, i.e. that something belongs to someone or something.

For the vast majority of singular nouns, simply add ’s to denote possession – thus, for example, *Fred’s book*, *the pope’s arms*, or *Hitler’s plan*. If you’re confused as to where the apostrophe should be in relation to the noun, one easy way to work it out is to imagine the apostrophe is replacing the word *of* – in these examples: *the book of Fred*, *the arms of the pope*, *the plan of Hitler*.

The confusion creeps in with plurals. If we’re talking about legs which belong to several dogs, should it be *the dogs’ legs* or *the dog’s legs*? Again, imagining *of* construction will help you to work out where the apostrophe should go. If we’ve got several dogs, it’s *the legs of the dogs*, therefore the apostrophe should go after the *s* in *dogs*, rather than before. A few more examples will hopefully help:

*the students’ books* = *the books of the students* (therefore the apostrophe goes after the *s*)
*the student’s books* = *the books of the student* (therefore the apostrophe goes after the *t*)

*the kings’ journeys* = *the journeys of the kings* (therefore the apostrophe goes after the *s*)
*the king’s journeys* = *the journeys of the king* (therefore the apostrophe goes after the *g*)

*the greengrocers’ apostrophe* = *the apostrophe of greengrocers* (therefore the apostrophe goes after the *s*)
*the greengrocer’s apostrophe* = *the apostrophe of a greengrocer* (therefore the apostrophe goes after the *r*).

There are, I’m afraid, exceptions, but this is probably enough to be going on with. The further reading recommended above will help with most of the exceptions.
* **It’s vs Its**
This, however, is an exception which does need to be mentioned here, as an awful lot of people are confused by what is a result of how English as a language evolved. In the light of what I’ve said above, you might reasonably think that it’s means something belonging to it. Unfortunately that’s not so. This apostrophe is one which denotes contraction, that is, the omission of a letter or letters, and means it is, or it has. Thus, for example:

It’s a nice day = it is a nice day.
It’s been raining = it has been raining.

Its (i.e. without an apostrophe) denotes something belonging to it, such as its doors, its pages, its wings.²

If you are unsure whether you need its or it’s, one simple way to tell is to ask yourself if what you’re trying to say is it is or it has. If you are, then you need an apostrophe (it’s), to denote the missing letter or letters (and shouldn’t therefore be using it in your essay, because it’s a contraction). If you mean something belonging to it, then you need its, which is perfectly fine in an essay.

* **There/their/they’re**
These confuse many students.
They’re is a contraction of they are (and therefore shouldn’t be used in an essay): they’re old. Their means belonging to them: it is their elephant.
There either means not here or denotes the existence of something (an easy way to remember this one is that here is in the word there): the book is over there; there are shops.³

* **Infer/imply**
These are often confused in essays. To imply something means to suggest it, whereas to infer something means to deduce or conclude it. Thus, for example:

He implied that I was guilty = he suggested that I was guilty
He inferred that I was guilty = he deduced that I was guilty.

So a newspaper article, for example, cannot infer anything. It can, however, imply something, and you, as the reader, may well infer something from it.

* **Should of/could of/would of**
These have crept into general usage in the last few years and are, quite simply, wrong. They are written versions of how many people say should have, could have, and would have. Whilst should of/could of/would of may well be fine in colloquial communication,⁴ they must not be used in formal prose.

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² This may seem strange, but you may find it helpful to note that it’s the same with other possessive pronouns, such as his, hers, and yours – none of which has an apostrophe. Thus, for example, his wings, her legs, it is yours.
³ The same applies, by the way, to where, which also refers to place (i.e. here or there).
⁴ Although many would disagree...
3. Referencing

Referencing – what’s the point?

Referencing is the way that academic writers acknowledge the influences on their writing and the elements of other people’s work that they have used to make their case. This allows the author to make lots of great points without having to do the original research themselves, to make use of other scholars’ writing ability or to simply acknowledge someone else’s efforts.

The Rules

You need to reference everything which is not entirely your own idea. That includes:

- All direct quotations.
- All summaries of other people’s ideas.
- All points of view offered by other people.
- All methodologies borrowed from other people.
- All data, evidence and information that you use.

The only exception is information which anyone would know, or which is very widely known. So:

“The Second World War was fought between 1939 and 1945 at a cost of many millions of lives.” (No reference required – most intelligent people know this)

“The Second World War was the result of a series of socio-economic and diplomatic failures that followed in the wake of the Treaty of Versailles and cost as many as 80 million lives. (Requires a footnote because a) there is a complex and arguable point being made about the causes; and b) there is a precise statistic which must have come from someone else’s academic research)

Any failure to do this will constitute an attempt to pass other people’s work off as your own. This is viewed as academic fraud or deception, and the consequences are severe.

BIBLIOGRAPHIES (the bit at the end)

The bibliography needs to be prepared according to the following rules, pay attention to your colons, commas, full stops, brackets and use of italics. Electronic versions of books, journals and essays which are exact facsimiles of the paper versions are referenced exactly as you would reference the paper versions. For other online resources, see relevant sections below.

In terms of secondary sources, you will use three major types in your work: books, essays in books, and articles in academic journals (these are usually accessed online via the library website, but we treat them as if we had the paper versions).

Books (sometimes referred to as a monograph)

Surname, Forename. Full Title of Book in Italics: Including Subtitles and Dates After a Colon with Each Important Word Written with a Capital (City of Publication Nearest to You, Date of Publication). [Full stop at the end]

Examples:


Some books are published in two or more locations. Always list the city nearest to you.

Referencing an old book in a new edition:
You add a few extra details in square brackets when you reference a modern edition of a book that is very old and which you are using as primary evidence. You do this to show that you understand that these ideas produced in a very particular context. You add in the original place and date of publication like this:


**Essays in Books**
Surname, Forename. ‘Full Title of Essay in Single Inverted Commas but not Italics: “Double Inverted Commas are for Quotes Within the Title” and Each Important Word is Written With a Capital whether it is in the Original or Not’, in Firstname Surname (ed. or eds. if there is more than one name), *Full Title of Book in Italics* (City of Publication Nearest to You, Date of Publication), 123-456 [the page numbers of the essay in the book must be included]. [Full stop at the end]

**Example:**

**Articles in Journals**
Surname, Forename. ‘Full Title of the Article in Single Inverted Commas but not Italics: “Double Inverted Commas are for Quotes Within the Title” and Each Important Word is Written With a Capital whether it is in the Original or Not’, *Full Title of Journal in Italics* 4 [Number of journal in year or in series] (Year in Brackets), 123-456 [the page numbers of the article in the journal must be included]. [Full stop at the end]

**Example:**

**FOOTNOTES (the bit at the bottom of each page)**
If you don’t know how to insert these, Google it. Generally though, place the cursor (the flashing bar) at the place you want the footnote and click ‘References’ (in MS Word) then ‘Insert Footnote’. DO NOT try to do these by hand/putting a number in yourself.

Footnotes are placed at the end of the sentence, following the punctuation. Like this.\(^5\) Do not do it in the middle \(^6\) of the sentence. If you are quoting something ‘then it would look like this’, even if you carry on the sentence after the quote.\(^7\)

Footnotes are prepared according to similar rules to bibliographic references, but with three important differences:
- In footnotes, we list the forename before the surname: ‘David Jones, not ‘Jones, David’.

\(^5\) See?
\(^6\) This is incorrect
\(^7\) If you have several different quotes or ideas in a sentence then simply put both references in the footnote, like this: James Greenhalgh, *A Guide to Drying Paint* (Manchester, 2016), 27; Jamie Wood, *The Astonishing Persistence of Darlington Town FC in the Football Leagues* (Darlington, 2014), 55-56.
An entry only appears once in a bibliography, but you may have to refer to the same work several times in footnotes. When you mention the same book, article or essay more than once in your footnotes, you use the full citation the first time, but thereafter you use what is called ‘short form citation.’ Do not use *ibid.* or *op. cit.* or other shortened versions you may see in books you read.

In footnotes, you always need to indicate the specific page or pages that you have taken your information from. This means ending each footnote by telling us the exact page on which that specific quote, piece of information or idea is found.

**Books - First citation:**

**Books - Second and subsequent citations:**

**Essays in Books - First citation:**
Helen Smith, ‘Love, Sex, Work and Friendship: Northern, Working-class Men and Sexuality Before the Second World War’, in Alana Harris and Timothy Willem Jones (eds.), *Love and Romance in Britain, 1918-1970* (London, 2015), 61-80 (69-71). [The first set of page numbers are for the whole essay, the second for the pages on which the information can be found.]

**Essays in Books - Second and subsequent citations:**

**Articles in Journals - First citation:**
Graeme Anderson, ‘The Battle for the Streets of the Modernity: Charles Baudelaire’s Paris Walks’, *Telos* 94:3 (1995), 148-167 (149). [The first set of page numbers are for the whole article, the second for the pages on which the information can be found.] [Full stop at the end]

**Articles in Journals - Second and subsequent citations:**

**How to Reference Works Within Works**
Often, you will be using material which other scholars have already used. You do this by first referencing the original material in full (by following their footnote or reference to get the necessary information), then referencing where you found it, like this:


You can find out about the original source by following the scholar’s own footnotes – that’s why we have them; so that everyone can keep track of where everyone else gets their ideas from.

**NB: In the bibliography, you list only the work from which you took your information, not the original work.**

**Referencing Other Materials**
You will find that historians format references to archival sources in many different ways, in order to make it easier for readers to double-check their sources. This section establishes the regulations for referencing less common types of materials, and will be used mostly at second and third year, but
occasionally in the first year. For anything not found here, refer to the MHRA Style Guide, which can be found on Google.

Archival Documents:
The goal here is to give enough information about the document so that a) it can be found easily by subsequent researchers; and b) the reader can draw some conclusions for themselves about what type of document it is. Make sure you include a list of abbreviations at the beginning of your bibliography. So, the convention is that you list the following, in the following order:

- Identification of the author where there is an individual or corporate author (e.g., Committee of Enquiry into the Condition of the Plantations of the State of Georgia; Kaiser Wilhelm II; Charles Darwin). If the author is unknown, write Anonymous. If the author is obvious (for example, in a law passed by Parliament) or is included in the description of the document, omit this step.
- A description of the document (e.g. Report on the Progress of the Cholera in Birmingham; Charter for the Holding of a Market in the Borough of Malmesbury; Letter from Charles Fourier to Arnaud Lefebvre). Never abbreviate this.
- Date of production. If you don’t know the date, write ‘N.d.’ followed by your best guess in square brackets [c. 1912?].
- Place of production (where relevant). If you don’t know the place, you write ‘N.p.’ followed by your best guess in square brackets [Berlin?]. It is not always relevant where something is written or published; you need to judge.
- Page numbers, if given.
- Holding institution, followed by an em-dash (e.g., Lincoln Cathedral Library; British Museum; Archives Municipales de St. Peter). List in full for the first reference; abbreviate for second and subsequent references; include a list of abbreviations at the beginning of the bibliography.
- The sorting categorisation used by the holding institution, followed by an em-dash (e.g., Minutes of the Housing Committee; Department of Transport; Personal Correspondence). List in full for the first reference; abbreviate for second and subsequent references; include a list of abbreviations at the beginning of the bibliography.
- Box or file number, followed by a full stop.

So, a first reference would look like this – note how to save time later, in the first instance where we will be using the same sources a lot, we have:


And a second reference would look like this:


(Note how a common shortening of Manchester to Mcr has been used to keep the reference brief).

Ancient and Medieval Sources
Medieval and ancient sources can be idiosyncratic, so exercise caution and consult with a lecturer where unsure. The general principle is to provide readers with complete information in as brief a citation as giving all the necessary information will allow. When in doubt err on the side of providing more, rather than less, information.
So:

- Original Author,
• *Opus/edition/folio numbering* etc. in italics
• Modern Editor
• Place and date of modern publication
• Page number, where appropriate
• For example

St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Teologica* 2.4.1, David Mitchell (ed.) (Chicago, 1990), 135.

Second and Subsequent References
Aquinas, *Summa Teologica* 2.4.1, 135

**Online Materials**
Material widely published originally on paper (as a book, or an article in an academic journal), but accessed online (say, through the university library website or through Early Books Online), should be referenced only as if you had used the paper version. If, however, the archival collection is available only online it should follow this format:
However, one-off documents that were not published like that, but which are reproduced *in their original form online* should be referenced as for real ‘paper’ archives, but at the end, add ‘accessed at [web address] on [date of access].’
For example, if you access the *Daily Express* through the UK Press Online Database, just footnote:

**Online Archives**
Follow the advice for normal archives as far as possible adding online archive and accessed on in the following manner:

Second and Subsequent references are at your discretion, but follow similar rules to those given for books. For example:

25 BBC/PWA, Ken Long, 20 Nov 2003

**Websites**
If the website content itself is the evidence, then:
• Author’s name (where known)
• Title of piece/section
• Date produced (where known)
• Full url
• Date accessed


**Newspaper Articles**
• Author (where known)
• Headline (where known)
• Newspaper (*in italics*)
• Date of publication.
• Page number (where known).
Films

- Organisation making the movie if not a film studio (omit this stage if a commercial film on general release).
- Title of Movie in italics.
- Date of initial release in brackets
- Director(s)
- Writer(s) of screenplay, with reference to original story writer.
- Relevant minute(s) for the evidence you are using.
- Archive from which the movie was obtained, if relevant.

26 Gone With the Wind (Restored edn., 1988 [Orig., 1939]). Directed by Victor Fleming, written by Sidney Howard from a novel by Margaret Mitchell. Minute 78.


TV

- 'title of episode',
- title of series in italics
- Broadcaster & year in brackets
- Time in programme where shown (if known)


Sounds & Music

- Composer or Author name.
- Title
- Artist/Orchestra/Conductor/Speaker as relevant
- (Recording company, CD reference, Date)
- [Format where relevant e.g. on CD]


Images

References for images should appear not in the bibliography but under a separate ‘List of Images’ in the order that they appear within the essay. Alternatively, references may appear as captions beneath images that are appended to the document.

References should provide basic information about the image, including the artist (if known), title, location (e.g. museum, city, country), and date, where applicable. You should also provide the source of the image, whether a book, article, or website, according to the guidelines above.

Example:
Sandro Botticelli, *The Birth of Venus*, Uffizi, Florence, Italy, ca. 1484

For images you have produced yourself, explain what the photo is, when it was taken, and conclude by indicating 'Photo: author’s own’.

**Interviews**

When referencing oral interviews, there are several conventions that you need to observe. First of all, when quoting from them, you need to include all the pauses (marked with ...), the ermmms, the errrrs, and the grammatical and syntactical ‘errors’ that spoken speech contains. Second, you need to ascertain whether the speaker wishes their anonymity to be preserved – and if they do, then you must preserve it. You then include:

- Interview with [name of subject] or [initials of subject] or [alias of subject]
- Date of interview.
- Location of material (e.g., Material in author’s possession; Northwest Sound Archive – Hattersley Project – Box 14 – Tape 9)
- Ideally, the point in the interview at which you took the words. Minute 4.

NB: You may, however, wish to keep interviews you do yourself anonymous and we would advise this.

**Dissertations**

When referencing dissertations, proceed as for a monograph book. However, substitute ‘Unpublished PhD [MPhil/MA – as appropriate] dissertation, University of _________’ instead of place of publication.


**Lectures and Papers**

You should do this very sparingly – often your lecturer will be referring to another work which you need to track down, but:

- Firstname surname
- Title of Lecture (with Week number) in ‘single inverted commas’
- Description in square brackets []
- Course name or conference in italics
- Date delivered so:


  **For a paper**

  Mark Hocknull, ‘From Darwin to David Icke’ [seminar paper], *University of Lincoln Staff Seminar, Lincoln*, delivered 12 Aug 2013

**Finally**

The key watchword with presentation of referencing is **consistency**. You **must** be consistent in how you present your footnotes and bibliography, even down to what you will almost
certainly think is ridiculous detail. Thus, for example, if one reference has the page number as 62, others should not have, e.g., p. 62, p 62, p62, p.62, P62, pg62, etc.

As I've said at several points in this guide, all this is painful at first, but it really does get easier with practice! Keep this guide handy, use it, and by the time you finish your degree, you'll be able to state on your CV that you are able to present written work accurately, according to required style guidelines.
4. How to write an essay

Introductions

General motto:

* A good essay has a good introduction.
* A bad essay usually has a bad introduction.

You should pay particular attention to your introduction. Its purpose is to give the reader a clear, unambiguous statement of aims. That is, tell the reader what you intend to talk about, and most importantly why.

Think of your introduction as a map which you are using to navigate the reader. You should not keep your best idea for the end. Remember your essay is not a detective novel. The murderer is not revealed in the last page. You should communicate your conclusion to the reader from the beginning. Therefore you need to be direct and economical in your mode of address as your introduction has a lot to do- setting the scene, historiographical debate, how are you building upon. Do not be scared to say that your essay is original (though you should not use that word).

This may seem obvious but your introduction should introduce your reader to your topic. You are setting the scene and letting your reader get to grips with your topic. Your introduction informs the reader of your essay and gives them the first impression of your essay: so let’s be nice and give the reader a chance to be aware of your topic and your arguments. Do not launch into an argument.

Your introduction should set the scene, inform the reader about the historiographical debate and where are you situating yourself.

Remember your introduction should only be 10% of your final word count i.e. 200 words in a 2000 word essay.

Useful phrases:

This essay explores...

This essay will investigate/ consider/ detail...

This essay examines/ demonstrates/ contends/ purposes that...

Try avoiding the use of -

In order to respond to the question..., it is first necessary.

This sentence is too ‘A’ level and does not allow you to create a strong argument.

Check List:
1. Does your introduction state the aims of your essay?
2. Locate your argument in the critical debate?
3. Check that your ideas are logical?
4. Make sure that your introduction does not contradict your essay or arguments?
The Body of the Essay- Structure

Clues on how to structure your essay can be found in your question.

For instance:

Is the growth of the modern state best explained as a response to the demands of warfare? Answer with reference to any sub-period of your choice.

Listen carefully to the question. It merely invites you to consider (a) growth of modern states with (b) warfare- for instance the total warfare of WW1.

(A) Discuss the emergence of the modern state with reference to nationalism and the projects of modernity.

(B) Discuss the events of WW1 explaining how total war was important to the formation of modern state [creation of new countries] and why it was a departure from the eighteenth-century notion of Enlightenment.

Within this framework there is plenty of room to incorporate critical opinion for agreeing and disagreeing with the question and for providing alternative theoretical models that may best explain your question.

Therefore, you should refer to academic work in your essay. They can be used to confirm or as a springboard for your argument. They can also disagree with your claims. By acknowledging other historiographical writings, you demonstrate an awareness of the issues surrounding your topic.

Also, discuss historical studies that challenge your work. You should also consider counterarguments. By allowing the reader to see counter-arguments you demonstrate analytical maturity. It also shows that you have researched the topic. A one-sided argument is just boring to read.

Checklist:
1. Work out how the question is structured before you decide how to organise your essay.
2. Engage with the critical debate
3. Acknowledge counter-arguments
The Body of Essay: Linkage

Your essay should run smoothly between ideas - awkward transitions are off-putting to the reader.

Some helpful words

**Yet**

**But**

**Instead of**

**Nevertheless**

**Despite**

**Bearing that in mind**

**Beyond that**

**Because of this**

**For instance**

**For example**

**While**

**In order to**

**However**

**Having said that**

**In contrast**

**On the Contrary**

**On the other hand**

**Perhaps**

**Moreover**

**Furthermore**

**As well as**

**As a matter of fact**

**WARNING:** Please check what these words mean, as they don’t all mean the same thing. Don’t just spray them round hoping they are the right ones.

Try to avoid words such as ‘Clearly,’ ‘Indeed’ and ‘In fact’ if possible.

The essay is a large (macro) argument which is made of smaller (micro) arguments. It is these smaller arguments that form the body of your essay. A successful essay builds bridges between these smaller arguments and the words above will hope you do this. If you don’t use bridges, the reader will struggle to find your argument.

**Please note that Paragraphs** should really be no longer than half a page double spaced. If your paragraphs are longer then your argument is lost. Words in bold above are words that highlight a new paragraph. These act as signposts for your argument and essay. Therefore, tell the reader what is happening, or about to happen, in terms of the argument or in the way that your essay is structured. Sometimes you can’t signpost until you re-draft as it is only then that you know your structure. If you
are changing directions explain *when* and *why*. For instance, ‘Until now this essay has discussed .... It will now turn to an examination of ...’.

**1. Link sentences, paragraphs and sections**  
**2. Signpost your argument**  
**3. If you are changing direction tell your reader**

**Conclusion**

If introductions are about making a first impression, conclusions are about leaving a lasting impression. This is the last thing your tutor will read before giving you a mark.

Weigh up the arguments already discussed in your essay- do not offer new ones or new material! How does your argument build up or challenge a strand of argument? Do not be afraid to stake your originality. You must conclude with one firm statement. Do not conclude by stating, it is a bit of both! It is very ‘A’ levelly’. Make your point clearly and refer back to the question

**Useful websites**

The University Library at Lincoln has a whole website for academic skills and it also includes academic writing and has linking words, approach words etc, much the same as you have in the Guide.

[http://guides.library.lincoln.ac.uk/learningdevelopment](http://guides.library.lincoln.ac.uk/learningdevelopment)

The University of Birmingham PDF has a great checklist on paraphrasing and structuring an essay p.25 onwards (ignore what it says before).

[http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/students/guide-to-academic-writing.pdf](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/students/guide-to-academic-writing.pdf)

Manchester have this website called the phrase bank (use the different sections on the left of the screen).

[http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/](http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/)
5. Structuring and Planning an Essay - Basic outline for an essay

Your essay will reflect a plan, so try and structure it around a plan that fulfils all the criteria below.

Once you have done your reading and worked out your main arguments you need to thematise your work. This is how you cut the cake so that the main body actually makes sense. The themes themselves are not important, but the clear and ‘followable’ (to the marker) structure they give the work is crucial. Don’t agonise over themes, just make a decision on them so you can divide your work up logically.

1. **Essay title.** Every essay must contain an actual or implied question. Your essay must focus on the title and address that question.

2. **Introduction.** In your introduction explain what you are going to do.
   a. Explain how you interpret the question, and summarise your conclusion.
   b. Identify issues you are going to explore.
   c. Give a brief outline of how you will deal with each issue, and in which order.*
   d. A thesis statement – what you are going to argue.*

   *The length of the introduction should be about one-tenth of your essay
   *c and d can be in either order, just make sure you cover them both.

3. **Develop your line of argument or reasoning.**
   
   **Theme 1:**
   a. This paragraph covers the first thing your introduction said you would address.
   b. The first sentence introduces the main idea of the paragraph
   c. Other sentences develop the topic of the paragraph. Include relevant examples, details, evidence, quotations and references.
   d. Lead up to the next paragraph.

   **Theme 2**
   a. The first sentence, or opening sentences, link the paragraph to the previous paragraphs, then introduce the main idea of the paragraph.
   b. Other sentences develop the paragraph’s topic.

   **Theme 3 ...**

4. **Conclusion.** The conclusion contains no new material.
   a. Summarise your argument and main themes
   b. State your general conclusions
   c. Make it clear why those conclusions are important or significant
   d. In your last sentence, sum up your argument very briefly, linking to the title

   *The length of the conclusion should be about one-tenth of the essay.

5. **References and bibliography**

List all the books, articles and other materials you have referred to within the essay.
This is the outline for a basic essay. There are many forms of essay, e.g. the descriptive essay, the argumentative/analytical essay, the evaluative/analytical essay, the compare and contrast essay etc. Please make sure that you understand which style of essay your assessment requires. This will probably be evident in the key ‘task word’ that the question uses.

Example:

Here is our hypothetical question

“The German Luftwaffe was unable to defeat the RAF in the Battle of Britain because their aircraft were inferior. Discuss”

It’s important to understand what the question is asking, it’s not asking you to just talk about the aircraft, it’s asking you to discuss the whole battle, the political situation, the technical and perhaps even environmental factors that led to the defeat of the Luftwaffe. Many questions are phrased as a statement or a direct question, but you must use your experience of the course you have been studying up to determine what the question really wants. We will not be asking you to write on things you have not studied.

Another example might be: ‘Economic problems were the main cause of the French revolution. Discuss’. This question is set on a course where there would have been one or two lectures and a seminar discussing the multiple causes of the French revolution, so ask yourself how the question is looking to cover knowledge you should have acquired on the course upon which the question is set. It clearly wants you to talk about more than economic factors, so don’t be caught out.

Introduction:

So, following the logic given in the first part of this guide, your essay might begin:

“This essay will consider the reasons why the German Luftwaffe was unable to defeat the British Royal Air Force (RAF) during the Battle of Britain.”

Or

“In the following essay the causes of German defeat in the Battle of Britain will be discussed with particular reference to Alexander’s theory of…”

Next, VERY briefly explain what the circumstances are:

“The Battle of Britain is the name given to...this took place between...the outcome was.”

Then explain what you will argue and how this fits into the historiographical context (what others have written):

“Central to the argument presented here is the idea that there is no single feature which can explain the outcome of the battle, but that a and b were the most crucial factors....”

“Author x has argued that the primary reason was z, whilst author y has proffered a more technical approach which accounts for z but also acknowledging the role of a, b and c.”

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8 It is vital that you use references to illustrate these ‘facts’. Your footnotes should follow the rules in the Style Guide, above.
Then explain how you are going to structure it. It is crucial that you both **thematically divide** your essay up (so that you may systematically address the points) and that you outline this structure at the start.

**Thematising your essay is the way that you give your arguments structure** – often these themes will be represent different ways of arguing about the subject – in the French revolution example (above) you might divide the essay up into sections on economic factors, social factors and political factors. The structure and clarity provided by dividing the main body into different thematic areas is the important thing, not the choice of themes themselves. However, avoid thematising around time periods or geography (particularly nation-states).

“This essay will consider three crucial elements and their role in determining the outcome of the battle. The quality of the aircraft available to both air forces is explored with reference to David Smith’s argument that the Bf109 was...The quality, training and availability of pilots is considered in the second section and the overarching strategy of the commanders Dowding and Goering is considered in the final section.”

This should be no more than 10-15% long, that’s 300 or so words in a 2500 word essay. Even the incomplete version I have given above is over 200 words long, so don’t waste words.

**Main Body:**

*Having established the problem, given the background, illustrated your structure and outlined your argument this is where you make your arguments count.* Any point you make should be backed up by evidence. If you are making a claim it has no value without evidence to back it up. The sections might look something like this.

“Smith has argued that the primary reason for the defeat of the Luftwaffe was the inferior aircraft they possessed. At the heart of his thesis is the inferiority of the Bf109 when compared to the Spitfire...However, Michael Jones has pointed out that the British did not possess enough Spitfires to counter the Bf109, relying instead upon the slower Hurricane. The supposed superiority of the RAF in terms of aircraft must then be questioned. Figures from the battle emphasise the Luftwaffe also used both Bf109s and more vulnerable Bf110s, these could be outclassed by Hurricanes, which were lighter and faster. This evidence points to a more complex picture of the strengths of the combatants. Since neither side had a clear technological advantage, the manner in which this aircraft were operated and deployed must then also be considered to give a more comprehensive picture.”

Here I’ve argued (in a very, very short way) that the superiority of the aircraft cannot be the only explanation and I’ve represented several opinions whilst putting forward my own argument. The best answers will not just survey the material, but use accounts to construct their own argument.

You need to reproduce this type of thing in all the sections so plan it out – maybe like this:

**Section 1.: Aircraft Technology**

- Smith’s argument counter balanced by the problems outlined by Jones
- Figures from Victor Anderson cast doubt upon this
- Research from author x which states that British Aircraft were aided by radar
- Yet these explanations are problematic because as author b points out etc

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10 Michael Jones, *Aerial Warfare in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester, 2010) p.113
Section 2: Training....

Conclusion

This has to echo your original argument and tally with what you’ve said in each section. You are trying to summarise what you have done. Do not introduce new material at this point. If you are unsure of how to do this check out a conclusion in a Jstor article.

“The evidence considered in this article points to two main conclusions...”
### Essay checklist

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<th><strong>Overall purpose:</strong></th>
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<td>Have you answered the main questions or dealt with the main issues in your essay topic?</td>
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<td>Go back to your plan, have you dealt with each section thematically</td>
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<th><strong>Conclusions:</strong></th>
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<td>Are your conclusions supported by evidence?</td>
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<td>Have you evidenced EVERY SINGLE CLAIM YOU MAKE.</td>
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<th><strong>Consistency:</strong></th>
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<td>Are you telling one story? Have you tidied up loose ends?</td>
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<th><strong>Clarity:</strong></th>
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<td>Have you avoided repetition and confusion?</td>
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<td>AVOID REPEATED WORDS</td>
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<th><strong>Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar:</strong></th>
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<td>Could someone else check these if you are in doubt?</td>
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<td>Try reading your work out loud to yourself, you will pick up far more errors this way.</td>
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<th><strong>Assessment criteria:</strong></th>
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<td>Does your draft need any additions or changes of substance to meet the assessment requirements?</td>
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Useful Tips

If you have grammar problems check:
http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/exercises/grammar/grammar_tutorial/page_41.htm

Make a check list of your own: this is especially useful for avoiding repeated grammar and referencing issues. Try writing one out, then every time you make an error or your tutor points out in your feedback that you have an issue add it to the list.

Here is part of mine (which I have had since 1999):

- Is it double spaced?
- Are the margins the correct width?
- Is it in the right font?
- Are the footnotes and bibliography in the same font as the main text?
- Are the footnotes suitably smaller (ie: main text 12pt, FNs 10pt)?
- Does it have page numbers?
- Are all non-English words in italics?
- Are short quotations in ‘single inverted commas’ NOT in “speech marks”?
- Are all quotes within quotes in “speech marks”?
- Are long quotes of more than three lines indented, single-spaced and without inverted commas?
- Does the piece have my name or student number in the right places?
- Check commas and semi-colons in all footnotes as per style.