

Reference for Authors: rubric and grammar/usage guide

HISTORY JOURNAL PAPER RUBRIC

*Curious what makes an accepted paper? Here are some questions authors should answer and/or consider regarding concept, research and sourcing, organization, and execution when revising the paper.

CONCEPT: Does the paper have strong and insightful thesis? Did the paper address the issue, topic, or subject in a thoughtful and original way? Did the paper considered opposing points of view in shaping its ideas? Has the paper demonstrated a thorough understanding of its issue, topic, or subject?

RESEARCH & SOURCING: Does the paper support the position using appropriate and specific examples? Has the paper used academic research and quotes from source material? Are the sources authoritative? Are the sources appropriate and adequate for the issue, topic, or subject? Is the paper properly crediting the sources, both within the essay and in the list of works cited? Did paper avoid “accidental plagiarizing”?

ORGANIZATION & EXECUTION: Does the introduction present the thesis in a way that grabs the reader’s attention? Does it show understanding of the issue, topic, or subject? Do the paragraphs proceed in a logical way, with smooth transitions? Has the paper effectively used different writing strategies, like description or classification? Did the paper end with a strong conclusion that gives the readers a feeling of an end?

TECHNICAL ASPECTS: Does the paper phrasing and tone reflect a unique personal voice? Does the paper choose words carefully and use a sophisticated and varied vocabulary? Does the paper master grammar, punctuation, and usage rules? Is the paper writing free from redundancy? Is the paper free from typos, misspellings and other simple errors? Is the paper formatted correctly according to the rules of the Chicago Manual of Style?

And on grammar and usage:

1. Confusing Homophones.

Principle (a noun meaning fundamental law or doctrine)

Principal (a noun referring to a person with authority, a thing of primary importance, or a sum of financial capital).

Affect (most commonly a verb meaning influence)

Effect (most commonly a noun meaning result)

2. Confusing which and that.

“Which” introduces a non-restrictive clause, which is always set off by a comma from the word it modifies (like in this sentence) and from whatever follows. “That”

introduces a restrictive clause that typically goes without commas (like in this sentence). Because restrictive clauses require less punctuation, they are preferable.

3. Confusing the past and past-perfective tenses.

The English language has two past tenses: the simple and the perfective. The latter, of course, is most often formed by the addition of “had” to the simple past, although some verbs have separate past-perfective declensions (see/saw/had seen or is/was/had been).

In general, the past perfective is used to denote an action that occurs before an action that has already been rendered in the simple past.

Example:

Malik says that Jill had been to the movie. (present + past perfective= grammatically incorrect)

Malik said that Jill was at the movie. (simple past + simple past= grammatically correct but with an ambiguous chronology. Did Jill see the movie before Malik spoke?)

Malik said that Jill had been to the movie. (simple past + past perfective = grammatically correct, with clear chronology).

4. Excessive use of passive verb constructions

Students often try to eliminate the ambiguity of the passive voice by adding a prepositional phrase. This results in sentences that are unnecessarily verbose and stylistically awkward.

Example:

The question asked by the professor was difficult. (8 words)

The professor asked a difficult question. (6 words)

These sentences are identical in meaning, yet the latter requires fewer words and is thus stylistically superior.

5. Use of too many hyphenated words

You should never hyphenate words when the *Oxford English Dictionary* or *Webster's* indicates that the resulting construction exists as a single word.

Example: post-war should be postwar

Uncapitalized compound words are hyphenated only when used as an adjective.

Example:

The two presidential nominees fought for the votes of the middle class

The two presidential nominees fought for middle-class votes.

6. Other grammatical errors

Erratic verb tenses. Be consistent, do not switch between tenses in the middle of a paragraph, sentence or paper.

Fragmented Sentences. This is an elementary mistake. If a sentence does not have both a subject and a verb, it's a fragment. Fragmented sentences tend to be symptoms of prose so convoluted that the author loses track of the subject or verb.

Run-on Sentences. Run-ons are the opposite of fragments: a string of sentences that are run together as one. Split them up into two sentences, with correct punctuation.

Maintain your argument and or thesis. Students tend to lose track of their argument or thesis, resulting in a confusing paper without passion.

Punctuation rules. Using simple correct punctuation could avoid common mistakes

Example: Alice Paul was a leading feminist who founded the National Women's Party; **therefore**, she contributed to the success of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.

“Quote,” Footnote, the footnote goes after the quotation marks, not inside it!

7. Use the Chicago Style Guide, when citing sources

Example:

Books (one/two authors):

Bittner, Stephen. *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw* (Cornell University Press: New York, 2008).

Heimert, Alan, and Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritans in America: A Narrative Anthology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).

Journal Article:

David Welch. “Painting, Propaganda and Patriotism.” *History Today* 55 (2004): 44-5.

Here is a website to help your citation needs:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

8. Peer Edit. We strongly suggest having a friend, relative, teacher or the Writing Center edit your paper. This will help your degree of writing and will strengthen your paper.

* We give credit to Professor Steve Bittner, for creating a style guide, which we raided. *