

History Style Guide

1. The humanities, particularly the discipline of history, relies on *The Chicago Manual of Style* also known as Turabian for footnote and bibliography citation. Suggestions and examples of this format can be found in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th addition. A web page summary may also be consulted:
http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
2. As opposed to most other disciplines, historical writing is done in the past tense. Noted historian James McPherson is not currently writing about the motivations of Civil War soldiers. Therefore, a reference to McPherson and his work, *For Cause and Comrades* would say, “James McPherson wrote *For Cause and Comrades* to answer student questions for what motivated soldiers to continue fighting during the Civil War.”
3. Standard, good writing techniques in other disciplines also apply in history. This would include such things as:
 - Active voice – Avoid various forms of the “to be” verb.
 - Slang and jargon are not appropriate in a formal paper.
 - Avoid quotation marks around words or phrases to show disbelief or to connote dramatic effect. Quotes should be used to set off specific references and the exact words of someone else.
 - Develop the paper’s thesis early and build the rest of the writing around it. Good papers have introductory and concluding paragraphs. The rest of a paper consists of paragraphs, which prove or develop the thesis statement.
 - Spell and grammar checks cannot find all errors. Refer to a dictionary, thesaurus and the Front Range reference work, *The Electronic Everyday Writer 3.0* by Andrea A. Lunsford.
 - Proper documentation avoids plagiarism. Apply the citation and summary skills learned in Comp 121 and 122 to the writing history papers.