



Teacher911

2020

HISTORY
Gr 7-12
How to:
Write a
History Essay

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History is the records of past events at different places. History essays are based on facts and opinions of other historians about a certain period of history. For you to come up with content for your paper you need to have detailed information about the event under description.

1. Understand the question



The first step to writing a good essay, whatever the subject or topic, is to give plenty of thought to the question. An essay question will set some kind of task or challenge. It can include:

- Explanation of causes and/or effects of a particular event or situation.
- Agreement / disagreement with a statement.
- Analysis and description of the causes and/or effects of a particular action or event.
- Evaluation of significance of a person, group or event etc.

2. Understand how you will be assessed

It is very important to know how you will be assessed when planning and writing your essay. Use the rubric as a guideline when planning to ensure you include all the necessary information and not waste time with writing down irrelevant facts.

Essays are assessed on PRESENTATION and CONTENT

2.1 Grade 7-9

PRESENTATION

Planned and structured
Synthesis of information



Constructed an argument (See Point 3.1)
Use of evidence to support the argument

CONTENT

The question has been fully answered. (See Point 1)
Content selection relevant to line of argument.

2.2 Grade 10-12

PRESENTATION

Planned and structured (See Point 3.2)
Synthesis of information (See Point 3.2)

Developed an original, well-balanced and independent line of argument (See Point 3.1)
with the use of evidence (See Point 3.2)

Sustained and defended the argument throughout (See Point 3.2)

CONTENT

The question has been fully answered. (See Point 1)
Content selection relevant to line of argument. (See Point 3.2)

3. Planning

Now that you know what is expected of you it is time to start planning.

3.1 Develop a contention (assertion)

A contention is the main idea or argument of your essay. It serves both as an answer to the question and the focal point of your writing. You should be able to express your contention as a single sentence.

An essay will then go on to explain and justify these statements in greater detail. It will also support the contention with argument and evidence.

Try to frame your contention so that is strong, authoritative and convincing. It should sound like the voice of someone well informed about the subject and confident about their answer.

3.2 Plan the argument

How are you going to develop the argument to prove your contention? A mind map is a very good method to use to accomplish this. To save time and to ensure that your essay presents a holistic whole, it is advisable that you include the basic structure of your essay here i.e.

Introduction (See Point 4.1)

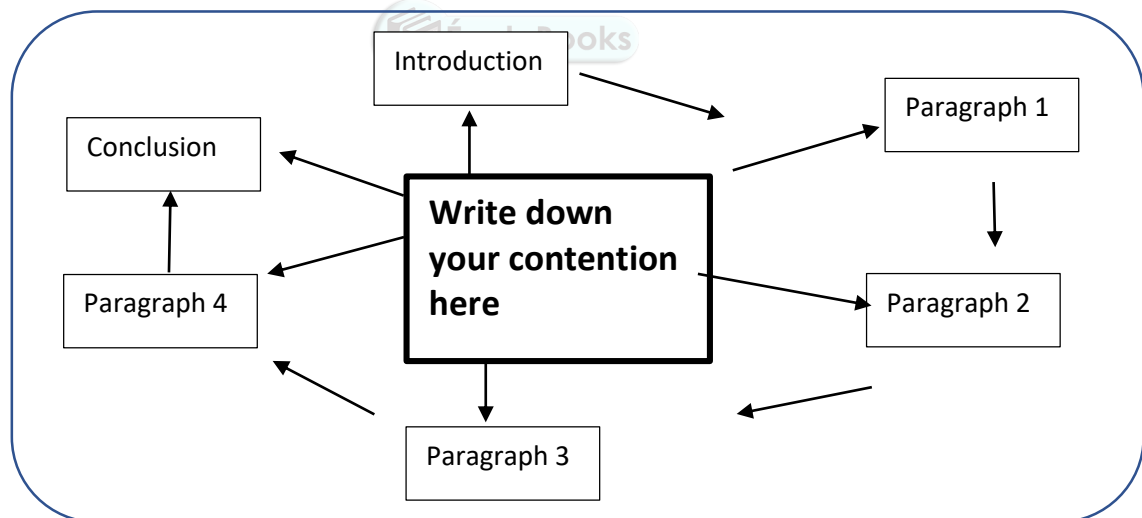
Body (See Point 4.2)

Conclusion (See Point 4.3)

Write down the facts that you will use to develop your argument. Now decide in which paragraph you are going to use the relevant facts.

Make sure that your facts are chronological and logical and follow on each other to paint a clear picture.

Write the keywords of the facts in the correct paragraph.



Take note of the fact that ALL paragraphs must relate to your contention.

4. Writing

4.1 Introduction paragraph

The introduction is important for several reasons. It is the reader's first experience of your essay. It is where you first address the question and express your contention. It is also where you lay out or 'signpost' the direction your essay will take.

Write an introduction that is clear, confident and punchy. Get straight to the point – do not waste time with a rambling or storytelling introduction.

Start by providing a little context, then address the question, articulate your contention and indicate what direction your essay will take.

4.2 Content paragraphs

Your paragraphs should be well organised and follow a logical sequence.

You can organise paragraphs in two ways: chronologically (covering events or topics in the order they occurred) or thematically (covering events or topics based on their relevance or significance). Every paragraph should be clearly signposted in the topic sentence.

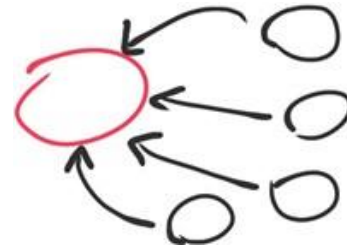
A good history essay contains paragraphs that are themselves ‘mini-essays’, usually between 100-200 words each. A paragraph should focus on one topic or issue only – but it should contain a thorough exploration of that topic or issue.

A good paragraph will begin with an effective opening sentence, sometimes called a topic sentence or signposting sentence. This sentence introduces the paragraph topic and briefly explains its significance to the question and your contention. Good paragraphs also contain thorough explanations, some analysis and evidence, and perhaps a quotation or two.

4.3 Conclusion



The conclusion is the final paragraph of your essay. A good conclusion should do two things. First, it should reiterate or restate the contention of your essay. Second, it should close off your essay, ideally with a polished ending that is not abrupt or awkward.



One effective way to do this is with a brief summary of ‘what happened next’. Your conclusion need not be as long or as developed as your body paragraphs. You should avoid introducing new information or evidence in the conclusion.

5. Referencing

If you are writing an essay for an assignment/project etc. where you conducted research, you must always reference your sources.

Use the Harvard method of referencing.
A reference generator can be found at:

<http://www.harvardgenerator.com/references/online-image>

OR use the following format for different types of sources:

📖 HARVARD METHOD OF REFERENCING

BOOK

Smith, A (2010). *Grade 7 Life Orientation*. Johannesburg: Oxford University Press. p. 26-28.

JOURNAL ARTICLE

Smith, A. (2011). Environmental Issues. *Green Earth*. 5 (2), p. 179-314.

WEBSITE

Smith, A. (2009). *Pollution!* Available: <http://www.greenearth.com/>. Last accessed 10 June 2014.

EMAIL

Smith, A. water@love_our_earth.co.za. Cleaning Up. 22 March 2014.

INTERNET IMAGES

Leonid Gabelko, (2018), Cardboard Box On Wheels [ONLINE]. Available at: <https://www.dreamstime.com/stock-photo-cardboard-box-wheels-recycled-paper-delivery-goods-image56150001> [Accessed 2 July 2018].

6. Proofreading

When proofreading, look first for spelling and grammatical errors, typographical mistakes, incorrect dates or other errors of fact.

Think then about how you can improve the clarity, tone and structure of your essay. Does your essay follow a logical structure or sequence? Is the signposting in your essay clear and effective? Are some sentences too long or 'rambling'? Do you repeat yourself? Do paragraphs need to be expanded, fine-tuned or strengthened with more evidence?

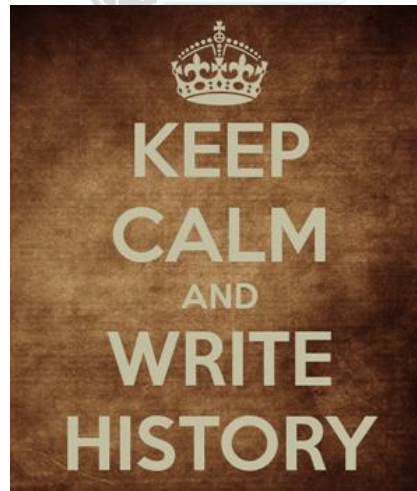


7. Useful Tips

- 7.1 Always write in the third person.
Never refer to yourself personally, using phrases like "I think..." or "It is my contention...". They should sound rational and factual – not like an individual expressing their opinion.
History writing should demonstrate research, analysis and evidence while articulating a compelling argument. It is not a forum for creative writing or personal viewpoints.
- 7.2 Always write in the past tense.
Always be careful about your use of tense. Watch out for mixed tenses when proofreading your work.

- 7.3 Avoid generalisations.
Generalisation occurs when you form general conclusions from one or more examples. Try to avoid generalisation and look out for generalised statements when proofreading.
- 7.4 Write short, sharp and punchy.
Most of your sentences should be short and punchy. The longer a sentence becomes, the greater the risk of it becoming long-winded or confusing. Long sentences can easily become disjointed, confused or rambling.
- 7.5 Write in an active voice.
The active voice is preferable to the passive voice. In the active voice, the subject completes the action and in the passive voice, the action is completed by the subject. The active voice also helps prevent sentences from becoming long, wordy and unclear.
- 7.6 Think
You should think continually during the process of writing, from start to finish. Every idea, sentence or complicated phrase should be fully conceived in your mind before you commit it to paper.

A moment's thought and mental planning before each new sentence or paragraph is often the difference between clear and effective writing and aimless waffling. Pause before starting a new sentence and ask yourself what you intend to say and how you want it to sound. Read every sentence and paragraph when complete and think whether it says what you want it to.



REFERENCES

- [https://www.education.gov.za/Curriculum/CurriculumAssessmentPolicyStatements\(CAPS\).aspx](https://www.education.gov.za/Curriculum/CurriculumAssessmentPolicyStatements(CAPS).aspx)
<https://alphahistory.com/writing-a-history-essay/>
<http://www.harvardgenerator.com/references/online-image>
<https://alphahistory.com/writing-for-history/>
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