

Final Checklist for Writing Essays

After you have completed a draft of your paper, think about each of the following questions. If you find yourself unsure of the answers, ask a friend, your professor, or someone in the Teaching and Writing Center for help. If you answer 'no' to any of the following questions, you have probably identified a place where your paper needs a bit more work.

- Does my paper respond to the assignment? Does it answer the question? Is it in the proper form?
- Do I have a thesis statement? Does it express my main idea? Is it too narrow? Too broad? Misleading?
- Is my paper well organized? Does it have an introduction, a body and a conclusion? Do my paragraphs flow logically and smoothly? Do I include transitions?
- Is my argument well-developed? Do I give sufficient support in examples, quotations, and details? Do I use too many quotations? Do I quote enough? Do I have any questions unanswered?
- Does all the information I have included relate to my thesis? Is it all necessary? Does it add to my argument, or detract from it?
- Is my tone appropriate to the assignment, subject matter and the course? Do I sound too informal? Too stuffy? At any point am I condescending or offensive?
- Am I writing to the proper audience? Who am I supposed to be writing for? My professor? A classmate? A random person off the street? Is my paper geared for this audience?
- Do I use proper citations? Have I made it clear which ideas are mine and which come from my sources? Have I followed the citation style my professor suggested? If there is no specification, did I follow a standard form in a published style manual?
- Have I spell-checked my paper? Have I proofread it for typos and grammar problems?
- Does my paper end with a strong conclusion? Does it relate back to my thesis? Do I have any loose ends? Does it feel finished?

NOTE: Grammar, punctuation, and other sentence-level concerns are very important to any history essay. Before you turn in your paper, be sure that you do not have any mechanical errors. However, DO NOT start worrying about sentence-level problems until you are confident that you have finished all of the big picture concerns.