Writing a History Paper
Step 4: Writing

A Few Guidelines

1. Avoid stating timeless truths, even in the introduction.

2. Write in the past tense.
   The literary present should be used with caution in historical writing, since it encourages presentism and a loss of historical context.

3. Put your evidence in context.

4. Avoid presentism, antiquarianism and anachronism.

5. Cite, cite, and if you’re not sure, cite some more.
   Anything that does not fall into the category of “general knowledge” needs a citation. The Chicago Manual of Style is the most common citation guide used by historians, but always ask what citation format is expected in your course.

6. Make your goal to understand rather than to judge...

7. ...But remember that avoiding judgment does not mean abstaining from critical engagement.