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.**