

Tracy High School Social Studies Writer's Guide (THSSSWG)
by
The Tracy High School Social Studies Department

Date
Name of Class
Name of Teacher

The Tracy High School Social Studies department has adopted writing conventions to be used at all times in this class. This will make writing easier for you, because once you learn this system it will remain the same in many of your social studies classes. These conventions detail how all formal papers in social studies classes are to be formatted. It is based from Turabian or Chicago Style of writing commonly used in the social sciences nationwide.

Please follow these conventions whenever you write a formal paper in social studies unless you are told to do so otherwise by your teacher.

I. Title Page

All formal papers should include a separate title page. The title page should be the very first page of the paper. It is not numbered nor does it count as the first page. Page 1 of your paper is the page your paper actually begins.

Please observe the following conventions when creating a title page:

- All text on a title page is centered
- There should be 15 blank lines between the top of the page and the title of the paper
- All words in the title (except minor words such as a, of, in, etc...) should be capitalized
- Skip one line after the title to place "by" followed by your name
- Skip 20 lines
- Type the date, on the next line type the name of the class, on the next line type the name of the teacher (Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms. last name)

For an example of this format, see the title page of this document. Title pages that are written should position each item at about the same place on the page as the example. Pictures, photos, or other items on the title page should only be included with the teacher's permission. Do not include your name on any subsequent pages.

II. Inks, Fonts, Margins, and other small but Important Details

Handwritten papers

- Use blue or black ink
- Skip lines
- Leave one inch margins on the left, right, and bottom of the paper. Begin writing on the first full line
- Write neatly on one side of the paper. This is very important. Sloppily handwritten papers may be discarded (and graded zero)

Typed Papers

- Use 12 point Times New Roman font or a font approved by your teacher
- Double space the body of your paper (block quotes are an exception, see III below)
- Leave one inch margins on all four sides

All papers should be stapled when turned in

III. Uses of Sources

Many of the paper written in social studies will require the use of external sources. The following are general guidelines

A. Ways to use a source

- Quote it. In this case the exact wording of the source is used and enclosed in quotation marks
- Summarize its main ideas, events or data in one's own words
- Paraphrase one of its statements or passages. To paraphrase means to rewrite a section of the source in one's own words. |
In all three of the above, there must be parenthetical references directing the reader to the source of the information.

B. Three principles for using sources in a paper (from Harvard Expository Writing Project)

First Principle: *Use sources as concisely as possible, so one's own thinking is not crowded out by the presentation of other people's thinking, or one's own voice by quoting of other voices.* This means one should mention or summarize the source, perhaps quoting occasional phrases, unless there is a good reason to paraphrase close or quote extensively.

Good reasons to quote include the following:

- The source author has made a point so clearly and concisely that it cannot be expressed more clearly or concisely.
- A certain phrase or sentence in the source is particularly vivid or striking, or especially typical or representative of some phenomenon in the discussion.
- An important passage is sufficiently difficult, dense, or rich that it requires analysis, which in turn requires that the passage be produced so the reader can follow the analysis.
- A claim that is being made is such that the doubting reader will want to hear exactly what the source said. This will often be the case when one criticizes or disagrees with a source, the reader wants to feel sure the source is not being misrepresented. Remember to quote enough of the source so the context and meaning are clear.

Second Principle: *Never leave the reader in doubt as to when it is the writer speaking and when a source is being used.*

Avoid this by citing the source immediately after using it, but also (especially when quoting directly) by announcing the source in the sentence or phrases preceding its appearance and by following up its appearance with commentary about it or development from it that makes clear where one's own contribution begins.

Third Principle: *Always make clear how each source used related to the argument.* This means indicating to the reader what the reader should notice or focus on in the source. The reader should never be left in doubt as to why a source is included in a paper.

C. Working quotations into the flow of writing

When a quote is used it is important to ensure the quotations flows into the rest of the writing so the quote does not seem abrupt, jarring, or just dropped in. Compare the first example, where the quote is dropped in to the later example where the quote is worked in smoothly into the author's sentences:

Poor: During the war America ran short of labor. The men were at the front. "at least 20 percent of all workers in wartime electrical machinery, airplane and food industries were women" (Norton 674).

Better: During the war labor was scarce as a result of men leaving for the front and a decrease in immigration. American women increasingly began to play an important role in war industries. According to Professor Norton, "at least 20 percent of all workers in wartime electrical machinery, airplane and food industries were women" (Norton 674).

The better example establishes the argument (that women worked in industry) a lead-in (according to Professor Norton) and edits the quote so that it flows with the sentence where it is inserted. Please note also the quote directly supports the argument.

To see more examples of how to work quotes into writing, look at the textbook and see how the author's worked quotes into the writing.

D. Technical rules for quotations

Quotations less than three lines long:

- The quotation should fit smoothly into writing
- Begin the quoted section with quotation marks
- Punctuation at the end of the quotation should fit into the sentence, not necessarily the sentence being quoted (see better example above)
- Include a parenthetical reference for the quotation at the end of the sentence that contains the quotation.

Quotations more than three lines long are called "block quotes" and should be formatted as follows:

- Block quotes should be indented 10 spaces from the left
- Block quotes are not enclosed by quote marks

- Block quotes are single spaced
- The parenthetical reference for the block quote should be placed just before the final punctuation of the quote
- In general, avoid using block quotes except when absolutely necessary.

Remember that, like shorter quotes, block quotes need to fit smoothly into the text. Also, do not forget to follow up the block quote with commentary that explains why the quote is significant to the paper.

E. Citing Sources

The Social Studies department uses parenthetical references to cite sources. Citations should be placed outside any closed quote marks but before the period. Parenthetical citations should include the last name of the author, the date of publication (followed by a comma) and the page(s) on which the quotation was found. Example: (Gladwell 2000, 64–65)

Sometimes the need to cite a source with more than one author. In such cases, the parenthetical references may look slightly different. Refer to the chart at the end of the handout. The left side describes parenthetical references first by indicating the form and then by showing an example. The right side shows an example of how one should enter the source into the works cited page. Please note that underlining means the same as using italics.

Please see the citation guidelines handout for more information and models of how to cite sources.

IV. Bibliography

Every paper that cites sources must have a works cited page. A works cited page is a list of the sources used (cited) in the paper. Observe the following conventions when putting a works cited page together:

- “Bibliography” should appear centered at the top of the page
- Arrange the list alphabetically by author’s last name
- Only include those sources that are actually cited
- Single space within entries, double space in between entries
- Use hanging indents for every line after the first in each entry: a hanging indent is the opposite of what is normally done in a paragraph – which is to say that all lines after the first are indented five spaces.

Examples:

Book with one author:

Gladwell, Malcolm. 2000. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Book with two authors:

Vare, Ethlie Ann and Greg Ptacek. 1988. *Mothers of Invention: From the Bra to the Bomb: Forgotten Women and their Unforgettable Ideas*. New York: Morrow.

Format for the citations of sources in used in parenthetical citations and bibliography are taken from KATE L. TURABIAN 8th Edition: A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and dissertations http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html

V. Common Issues in High School and College Writing (and how to fix them!)

Issues of Word Use

1. Verb Tense

When writing about events in the past use past tense

Example: In 1492 Columbus sailed to America

When writing about an author's argument use the present tense
Example: Galeano argues that the developed world is to blame

2. Word Choice

Use words that are comfortable to use. Avoid using a thesaurus for the purpose of adding "big" or "high powered" words. The simplest and most directly way of saying something is most often the best way to communicate ideas. Use a thesaurus only when trying to find a synonym to avoid word repetition.

Avoid slang or jargon and obscenity. Slang is informal language often used in daily conversation. Jargon is language that is specialized for use within certain fields and thus is often not understood by people not within those fields. Remember that formal writing is just that – formal.

Make writing as clear, simple, and direct as possible. Do not use five words when one is sufficient.

3. Write out numbers less than ten. You may use numerals for numbers greater than nine.
4. Avoid using personal pronouns (words that include the writer and/or the reader—I, me, you, us, we, etc..)
5. Do not use contractions
6. Avoid repetitive word usage.
Do not consistently begin sentences with the same words or phrases.
7. Use the active voice rather than the passive voice

In the active voice the subject of the sentence is the actor. In the passive voice the subject of the sentence is being acted upon.

Example: Active Voice: Duke William of Normandy conquered England in 1066. Passive Voice: England was conquered in 1066.

Frequent use of the passive voice can lead to dull, confusing, or indirect writing

Issues of Mechanics

1. Indent the first line of each paragraph
2. Make sure the subject and the predicate of the sentence agree in number
Example: Correct - The dogs are friendly Incorrect - The dogs in friendly

Issues of Support

History is the art of explaining the past through the use of reasoning and evidence. Although this section is somewhat repetitive of section III, it is here because errors that relate to support are quite common.

1. Unsupported Assertions: Avoid making statements or generalizations without a specific example or quote to support it. Example of an unsupported assertion:
The British view of taxation was that the colonists were only paying off the debt they owed to their mother country. The British had spent a huge amount of money to protect the colonists from their enemies in the Seven Year's War and the taxes were just a way the Americans could say "thank you" to Britain for saving them from the nasty French.

Example of a supported assertion:
The British saw the issue of taxation differently. Britain had incurred a large debt as a result of the French and Indian War. According to Norton, the British debt "had nearly doubled" as a result of the war, increasing from "73 million pounds" in 1754 to "137 million pounds" in 1763 (Norton 2005, 128). The British believed the Stamp Act was a justified way of sharing the costs of colonial protection.
2. Quoting more than is needed: Quote only the section needed. It is okay to edit a quote to make it shorter, as long as the meaning is not changed.
3. Using quotes where the relation of the quote to your argument is unclear: Always make clear how each source used related to the argument. If the source does not directly support the assertion being made, it should not be used.
4. Dropping quotes into writing with no lead-in or transition: Always transition into quotes –do not simply drop quotes into the writing.

