

SCHOOL OF HISTORY, CLASSICS AND ARCHAEOLOGY GUIDELINES FOR ESSAYS IN CLASSICS

This document is in two parts. The first part explains how you should go about organising your points, backing them up with evidence, and building them up into a finished essay. The second covers in detail the standard style for referencing and presentation that applies for essays in Classics, and offers advice on how to avoid solecisms in English grammar, spelling and punctuation.

For information on the University's academic misconduct policies, see: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/history-classics-archaeology/information-current-undergraduates/your-studies/assessment-and-feedback/academic-conduct>. A *Classics Student's Guide to Good Academic Conduct, Essay Writing and Referencing* is linked from this page.

PART 1: CONTENT

1.1 General

1.1.1 When we mark an essay, we look for four things above all:

- factual knowledge of the subject;
- an understanding of those facts;
- the ability to develop a coherent and well-argued case on the basis of that understanding;
- the ability to communicate those ideas in clear, well-organised prose.

Your approach to essay writing should take account of these objectives.

1.2 The essay question

1.2.1 Make sure that you understand the question that has been asked and that you answer that question, not the one you wish had been asked. You will not receive credit for writing down everything you know about a given topic; you should only include in the essay things that are relevant to the essay in hand, and which contribute to the argument you are trying to develop. Essay questions may consist of two or more parts; make sure that you answer all parts completely.

1.2.2 Never lose sight of the essay question; check that all your paragraphs relate to the question and that you have made it clear to the reader (either explicitly or by means of the logical structure) how they relate.

1.2.3 To ensure that you have a well-ordered and well-argued case to make, you should always prepare an outline before you begin writing. Always take care over the way you organise your answer. One good structure is: introduction, argument and conclusion. The introduction and conclusion are there to help the reader catch on to what you are trying to say in between. Keep your reader in mind at all times; writing is communication, not just an assessment exercise.

1.3 Introduction

1.3.1 In the introduction, state briefly how you understand the question, and indicate briefly how you are going to approach it. Avoid giving a one-sentence, summary answer to the question in the introduction.

1.3.2 Remember that you are introducing only your essay, not the subject as a whole, and so do not begin with a string of irrelevant general statements. There is no need to explain who people were, what the work is about, etc.: that can all be taken for granted. Avoid weak and/or over-formulaic introductions, for example beginning with a dictionary definition ('X is defined by the *Pocket Oxford Dictionary* as...'), quotation, over-generalisation or something trivial ('X was born in...'). (If you must quote a dictionary in your essay, it should be the *Oxford English Dictionary* or the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, not one of the smaller dictionaries.) Do not substitute a different question by beginning: 'In order to answer X (the question asked), it is necessary first to write about Y (some other issue)'.

1.4 Argument

1.4.1 The middle of the essay should connect with the beginning (which says what the question is) and the end (which says what the answer is) by way of a logically-constructed and fully-documented argument.

1.4.2 Each paragraph should form a logical unit in itself, and the argument should be connected by transitions between paragraphs. Remember that you cannot assume that your reader will follow your own sequence of thought if you have not made all the logical steps explicit. You should signpost all the logical connections so that it is clear to the reader where you are in the argument, how you reached that point, and where the argument is going next.

1.4.3 Make sure that it is clear why a reader needs to know the information you are giving and how it is relevant to your argument. When you introduce a point, state why you are discussing it. Do not leave the reader to fill in the gaps.

1.4.4 Always argue any point you make; never simply assert it. Support each statement with appropriate and sufficient evidence. Explain the implications of your ideas, and justify them against any possible objections. Beware of including too much historical narrative or plot summary, and of substituting paraphrase for argument and analysis.

1.4.5 Your argument should not consist of generalisations, but should contain specific examples to back up the case you are making. See 1.6 below.

1.5 Conclusion

1.5.1 Your conclusion should summarise your argument and state your conclusion clearly.

1.5.2 Take care that you do not write an essay that ignores the question until the final paragraph, and then announces: 'In conclusion, therefore...' The conclusion must follow logically from what has come before and should seem the natural consequence of your argumentation.

1.6 Use of primary and secondary sources

1.6.1 It is always important to tie your argument to sufficient and relevant supporting primary evidence—ancient sources such as Greek and Latin literature, ancient histories, archaeological sites and material, inscriptions, art and coinage.

1.6.2 It is almost always necessary to make use of secondary sources as well, but you should do so transparently (by identifying the sources in your footnotes) and critically (for example, by giving your own reasons for finding A's interpretation more convincing than B's). You should show that you have worked through the issues that others have discussed, come to your own understanding of them, and applied them to arrive at your own personal interpretation. Avoid organising essays according to modern author (author A says this, author B says this, author C says this) and, instead, organise according to theme or question.

1.6.3 Most student essays contain too many quotations from modern scholars. You only need to quote a passage from a book or article if the point is controversial, or you are going to go on to argue with it or qualify it in some way, or it is a point which neatly encapsulates the point of view of the scholar whose interpretation you are discussing in some detail. You should not quote a passage simply because it expresses a point better than you could.

1.6.4 When using quotations in an essay, bear in mind that quotations do not 'speak for themselves'. It is usually necessary to follow a direct quotation with comments explaining its significance, how it serves as evidence for the particular point you are making, and sometimes drawing out relevant implications. The use of a longer quotation is normally justifiable only if you have a great deal to say about it and its contribution to your argument.

1.6.5 Never reproduce someone else's work word-for-word, or closely paraphrased, without due acknowledgement: to do so constitutes plagiarism. For guidance on plagiarism, see the section on plagiarism and ethics in the Honours/ Sub-Honours Handbook.

1.6.6 When using websites, bear in mind that they differ widely in their scholarly content. Some, such as JSTOR (<http://www.jstor.org/subject/classicalstudies>), consist of archives of journals all of which have been edited to a high standard of scholarship, and which originated in print form. Other websites have not been edited by scholars and may well be unreliable. *Wikipedia*, for example, is not sufficiently scholarly to use for researching an essay, as should be clear from the website's introductory page which states: 'Don't be afraid to edit—*anyone* can edit almost any page, and we encourage you to be bold!'

1.7 Illustrations

1.7.1 If your essay refers in any detail to objects (e.g. sculpture, vase painting, coins, gems, armour, mosaics, wall paintings), buildings or archaeological sites, all references should be documented with *illustrations*. These may be scanned, but must be legible—the larger, the better. Ensure that, if you edit an electronic image, you 'constrain proportions' before doing so, or you will 'stretch' and distort the image. All images must be numbered and keyed to your text, e.g. '(Fig. 17)', and a list of illustrations should be included, giving figure number, caption (what it

is, date, museum and inventory number, if applicable) and the source of your illustration. The source should be written out in full using the same conventions as for the bibliography (see 2.3 below), and should include page and/or figure numbers where relevant. For example:

Source: Kleiner, D.E.E. (1992), *Roman Sculpture*, New Haven, p. 35 fig. 12.

PART 2: PRESENTATION

2.1 General

2.1.1 The majority of academic work in Classics is submitted (and marked) electronically. When you submit your work electronically, you should take just as much care of presentational aspects as you would with a paper copy. Experience shows that it is easier to spot typographical mistakes on a printed copy than on a screen. Accordingly, we strongly recommend that you print a copy for the purposes of proofreading before submission.

2.1.2 Your work should be in 12 point font and double-spaced. The pages must be numbered. There must be a bibliography at the end of the essay. The word count must be stated at the beginning or the end.

2.2 Word limit

2.2.1 You must keep to the word limit that has been set for the essay. There is no 'percentage rule' by which it is permitted to overshoot the word limit by x per cent. The bibliography does not count towards the word limit, but everything else does, including appendices.

2.3 Bibliography

2.3.1 The bibliography should list all works directly quoted or referred to in the essay, and any others which you found useful. Items should only be included if you have used them yourself. The bibliography should normally contain no more than two sections: (i) published translations of primary sources and (ii) other modern works. There is no need to list primary sources in the bibliography if all you have done is to cite the ancient reference, but if a translation is actually quoted, then it should appear in the bibliography. Websites should be listed either in alphabetical sequence among the modern works or (especially if several websites are listed) in a separate section, following the modern works.

2.3.2 Items in the bibliography should be listed in alphabetical order by author's surname. The system of citation to be used is a variant of the 'Harvard system'.

For books:

Allison-Jones, L. (2010), *Artefacts in Roman Britain: Their Purpose and Use*, Cambridge.

Cooley, A. (2010), ed., *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, Cambridge.

Erskine, A. (2010), *Roman Imperialism*, Edinburgh.

Laurence, R., Cleary, S.E., and Sears, G. (2011), *The City in the Roman West, c. 250 BC-c. AD 250*, Cambridge.

Macleod, C.W. (1982), ed., *Homer: Iliad Book XXIV*, Cambridge.

Potter, D. (2014), *Rome in the Ancient World: From Romulus to Justinian*, ed. 2, London.

Quesnay, I.M. le M. du, and Woodman, A.J. (2012), eds, *Catullus: Poems, Books, Readers*, Cambridge.

Waterfield, R. (2010), tr., *Polybius: The Histories*, Oxford.

For journal articles:

Allison, P.M. (2001), 'Using the material and written sources: turn of the millennium approaches to Roman domestic space', *American Journal of Archaeology* 105, 181-208.

Badian, E. (1972), 'Ti. Gracchus and the beginning of the Roman revolution', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 1, 668-731.

Morley, N. (2001), 'The transformation of Italy, 225-28 BC', *Journal of Roman Studies* 91, 50-62.

Roth, U. (2005), 'No more slave gangs: Varro, *De re rustica* 1.2.20f.', *Classical Quarterly* 55, 310-15.

For contributions to multi-author volumes, collections of essays etc.:

Clausen, W.V. (1982), 'The new direction in poetry', in E.J. Kenney and W.V. Clausen (eds), *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. 2, *Latin Literature*, Cambridge, 178-206, 831-3.

Cooley, A.E. (2002), 'The survival of Oscan in Roman Pompeii', in A.E. Cooley (ed.), *Becoming Roman, Writing Latin?*, Portsmouth, RI, 77-86.

Dewald, C. (1997), 'Wanton kings, pickled heroes and gnomic founding fathers: strategies of meaning at the end of Herodotus' *Histories*', in D.H. Roberts, F.M. Dunn and D.P. Fowler (eds), *Classical Closure*, Princeton, NJ, 62-82.

Oakley, S. (1993), 'The Roman conquest of Italy', in J.W. Rich and G. Shipley (eds), *War and Society in the Roman World*, London, 9-37.

Alternatively, if the multi-author volume is given its own entry in the bibliography, the volume and the contribution should be cited separately as follows:

Roberts, D.H., Dunn, F.M., and Fowler, D.P. (1997), eds, *Classical Closure*, Princeton, NJ.

Dewald, C. (1997), 'Wanton kings, pickled heroes and gnomic founding fathers: strategies of meaning at the end of Herodotus' *Histories*', in Roberts, Dunn and Fowler (1997), 62-82.

2.3.3 So for books you need to cite four things:

- author (with initials);
- date of publication (in brackets);
- title (*in italics*, with initial capitals);
- and place of publication.

(If the book is an edition or a translation, add 'ed.' or 'tr.' as appropriate between the date of publication and the title.) For articles, you need to cite six things:

- author (with initials);
- year of journal (in brackets);
- title of article (in quotation marks, without initial capitals);
- name of journal (*in italics*);
- volume number of journal;
- and pages (just the page numbers, not 'pp.').

2.3.4 Do not forget to include the page numbers of journal articles.

2.3.5 The name of the journal may be given in abbreviated form (*in italics*), if you prefer, as long as the correct abbreviation is used. A list of the standard abbreviations for journals may be found at http://www.annee-philologique.com/files/sigles_fr.pdf .

2.3.6 If you consulted a journal article in an internet archive (i.e. online), the article should be cited as if in the print form, i.e. in the same way as Lintott (1990) above; the archive should not be referenced.

2.3.7 If you take a reference from an internet archive, it may be unnecessarily detailed, as for example:

'Ammianus Marcellinus on the Persian Invasion of A.D. 359', R.C.Blockley *Phoenix*, Vol. 42, No. 3. (Autumn, 1988), pp. 244-260.

The correct way to put that into a bibliography would be:

Blockley, R.C. (1988), 'Ammianus Marcellinus on the Persian invasion of A.D. 359', *Phoenix* 42, 244-60.

2.3.8 If you cite two or more items published by the same author in the same year, use the letters 'a', 'b', 'c' etc. after the date to differentiate between them. For example:

Marshall, B.A. (1977a), 'The date of Catilina's marriage to Aurelia Orestilla', *Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica* 105, 151-4.

Marshall, B.A. (1977b), 'The vote of a bodyguard for the consuls of 65', *Classical Philology* 72, 318-20.

2.3.9 Note that for books you must cite the place of publication, not the publisher. If your lecturers cite the publisher in their reading lists, this is simply to help you if you are ordering the book from a bookshop. For Penguin books, the place of publication is Harmondsworth (for older Penguins) or London. It is not 'Penguin'. Similarly, there is no such place as 'Loeb'. The item by West cited at 2.3.2 above is published in the Penguin Classics series, but that is not information that should be cited.

2.3.10 Websites should be cited as follows, with the date accessed:

'*De imperatoribus Romanis*: an online encyclopaedia of Roman rulers and their families', <http://www.roman-emperors.org> (accessed 1.10.17).

2.4 References

2.4.1 Whenever you make a point based on something you have taken from another author, you should give the reference. As a general rule, references to primary sources are best put in brackets in the body of the essay and references to modern works in footnotes at the bottom of the page.

2.4.2 Endnotes must not be used.

2.4.3 The footnote number should normally be placed at the end of a sentence. It must always follow the punctuation. For example:

Syme has a different argument.¹

not:

Syme¹ has a different argument.

or:

Syme has a different argument¹.

2.4.4 Footnotes should be numbered sequentially, i.e. do not start again at '1' on each new page.

2.4.5 References to ancient works should be in the following form:

Homer, *Iliad* 6.232-6

Herodotus 1.82-3

Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 316-18

Plato, *Symposium* 212c3

Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449b3

Ennius, *Annals* 34-50 Skutsch

Cicero, *In Catilinam* 2.18-23

Virgil, *Aeneid* 3.476-81

Horace, *Odes* 3.5.1-4

Tacitus, *Annals* 1.6

Diogenes Laertius 8.77

Augustine, *City of God* 12.10

2.4.6 If the author only has one surviving work, the name of the work is not given, and the reference consists of: author, book, dot, line/section number(s). If the author has more than one surviving work, the name of the author is given, and also the name of the work, and the reference consists of: author, comma, name of work (*in italics*), book, dot, line/section number(s). If several references are given, they should be separated with semicolons:

Homer, *Iliad* 6.232-6; Herodotus 1.82-3; Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 316-18.

But if several references are made to the same work, commas are used:

Homer, *Iliad* 6.232-6, 9.485-91; *Odyssey* 24.510-12; Herodotus 1.82-3, 86-90, 130.

Note that in this last example, the name of the author was not given before '*Odyssey*', because it had already been provided in the previous reference, before '*Iliad*'; similarly, '1.' (in the Herodotus reference) was not given before '86-90' or '130' because it had already been provided before '82-3'.

2.4.7 If the essay is about a particular text, it is acceptable to make your reference more abbreviated, as long as you use the correct abbreviations and there is no danger of ambiguity. For example:

Hdt. 1.82-3.

Virg. *Aen.* 3.476-81 (or simply '*Aen.* 3.476-81', if the author has already been stated).

The correct abbreviations for ancient authors and works can be found in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Do not invent your own abbreviations, or use different abbreviations for the same author or work.

2.4.8 If you are quoting from an ancient author in translation, it is not necessary to give a reference in the course of the essay to the translation from which you are

quoting. The translation should appear in the bibliography (in the form given at 2.3.2 above), and it will be assumed that that is the one from which your quotations have been taken. If you quote from more than one translation of the same text, however, a reference to the relevant translation should be given with each quotation.

2.4.9 Never cite ancient works by page number of a translation. Every ancient author has their own standard system of reference (line number, section number, or whatever): you must use this system and no other. Do not forget to state which work of the author it is that you are referring to, even if you think it is obvious (a reference such as ‘Plutarch 17.2’ is meaningless).

2.4.10 Never cite primary sources via a secondary work. If the text of your essay refers to Plutarch, the footnote should give the complete Plutarch reference, rather than saying (for example) ‘Scullard (1982) ...’ You do not need to acknowledge the fact that you came across the reference by reading Scullard rather than by reading through the works of Plutarch independently.

2.4.11 When referencing secondary works (whether books or articles) in the footnotes, do so in the following form:

⁴ Syme (1939), 78.

or:

⁴ The view of Syme (1939), 78 and of many historians since.

2.4.12 When referencing a note in a commentary, do so in the following form:

Nisbet (1970) on Horace, *Odes* 1.7.1.

If you have been discussing Horace’s *Odes* and it is obvious that that is what the reference relates to, you could write just ‘Nisbet (1970) on 1.7.1.’ in a footnote. The commentary itself should be listed in the bibliography.

2.4.13 The author’s initials should not be given in footnotes unless you need to distinguish between authors with the same surname. For example:

S.West (1995), 101-2; M.L.West (1997), 23-4.

2.4.14 You must not cite the full bibliographical details in footnotes: they should appear in the bibliography only.

2.4.15 Footnotes must always end with a full stop.

2.4.16 You only ever need to use the abbreviation ‘p.’ or ‘pp.’ if it is not obvious that the number which follows is a page number. Note that the abbreviation is ‘p.’, not ‘pg.’ (similarly, the abbreviation for ‘fragment’ is ‘fr.’, not ‘frg.’). Never use *id.* and *ibid.*, or ‘f.’/‘ff.’ (give the closing reference). The abbreviation ‘ed.’ (‘editor’, ‘edited by’) is followed by a full stop, but ‘eds’ (‘editors’) has no full stop.

2.4.17 To reference a website in a footnote, give the short form of the title of the website, with the word ‘website’. For example:

‘*De imperatoribus Romanis*’ website.

The full details, including the website address and the date of access, should be given in the bibliography (see 2.3.10 above).

2.5 Use of italics

2.5.1 Ancient words and phrases (*logos, polis, equites, princeps, lex lulia*), foreign words and phrases (*raison d’être*) and titles of ancient works (whether abbreviated or not: *Works and Days, Antigone, Aen., Ann.*) and modern books (*The Roman Revolution*) should be put in italics. Latin quotations should also be put in italics, without quotation marks.

2.5.2 Titles of articles should not be put in italics, but in quotation marks. Greek should never be put in italics.

2.6 Quotations

2.6.1 Quotations from English and other modern languages should be put in quotation marks. Quotations from Greek and Latin should not be put in quotation marks. Quotations that are several lines long should be set out as a separate block of text and indented (not centred); neither quotation marks nor italics should be used.

2.6.2 If passages of Greek or Latin are quoted, there is usually no need to give a translation. You should only give a translation (or translations) if the passage is obscure, corrupt or difficult, and its meaning needs to be established or explained (this may more often be the case when discussing philosophy). Never quote only in translation texts that you are supposed to have read in Greek or Latin.

2.6.3 Quotations of Greek must show the correct breathings and accents. There are several Greek fonts that can be downloaded from the internet.

2.7 Style

2.7.1 Try to write in a way that is scholarly and professional. Always write in full sentences, not in note form. Your writing style should not be colloquial—but it should not be pretentious either. Contracted forms in ‘-n’t’ are colloquial: so write ‘did not’ not ‘didn’t’, ‘cannot’ not ‘can’t’, ‘would not’ not ‘wouldn’t’, and so on. The expression ‘a lot of’ is also colloquial: in essays, write ‘a large number of’ or (better) ‘many’. The word ‘multiple’, on the other hand, is pretentious: again, write ‘many’. Some writers of English object to ‘quote’ (as a noun, for ‘quotation’), ‘due to’ (for ‘owing to’), ‘whilst’ (‘while’ is the normal form) and split infinitives (‘to effectively answer’ rather than ‘to answer effectively’); but these are ultimately matters of personal taste. R.W. Burchfield, *Fowler’s Modern English Usage*, ed. 3 (Oxford, 2004) is the standard reference work on English usage, and provides practical help with grammar, syntax and style.

2.7.2 Consistency is of paramount importance. Do not refer to ‘Heracles’ and ‘Hercules’ or ‘Virgil’ and ‘Vergil’ within the same essay.

2.7.3 ‘B.C.’ comes after the year (‘431-404 B.C.’), ‘A.D.’ before the year (‘A.D. 14’, not ‘14 A.D.’). It is acceptable to write ‘BC’ and ‘AD’ (without the full stops)—provided, of course, that your practice is consistent within the essay.

2.8 Spelling and punctuation

2.8.1 Mis-spelling, particularly of ancient names, gives an extremely bad impression. Note these correct spellings: ‘Euripides’ (not ‘Euripedes’), ‘Catiline’ or ‘Catilina’ (not ‘Cataline’ or ‘Catalina’), ‘Pompey’ or ‘Pompeius’ (the person), ‘Pompeii’ (the place), ‘Caesar’ (not ‘Caeser’, ‘Ceasar’ or ‘Ceaser’), ‘Mark Antony’ or ‘Marcus Antonius’ (not Marc Anthony), ‘Suetonius’ (not ‘Seutonius’ or ‘Suetonious’), ‘Tiberius’ (not ‘Tiberious’), ‘Colosseum’ (not ‘Coliseum’). Note also ‘emperor’ (not ‘emporor’ or ‘emporer’). Historians who show bias are ‘biased’ (they are not ‘bias’: ‘bias’ is a noun, not an adjective).

2.8.2 The most common error of punctuation is known as the ‘comma splice’. This involves using the comma as a ‘splice’, to join grammatically separate sentences. Consider the following examples:

The Roman constitution encouraged violence, there was no means of stopping it.

Naturally the aristocracy opposed it, it would have meant the loss of their only source of wealth.

In each case, two sentences have been joined (‘spliced’) with a comma. This is something that is not possible in English. Instead, you have to use a full stop or a semicolon, or insert a co-ordinating conjunction such as ‘and’, ‘but’ or ‘since’. So:

The Roman constitution encouraged violence. There was no means of stopping it.

or:

The Roman constitution encouraged violence; there was no means of stopping it.

or:

Naturally the aristocracy opposed it, since it would have meant the loss of their only source of wealth.

This error is particularly common before the word ‘however’. You must not write:

The Roman constitution encouraged violence, however, there was no means of stopping it.

Instead, write:

The Roman constitution encouraged violence. However, there was no means of stopping it.

or:

The Roman constitution encouraged violence; however, there was no means of stopping it.

When you are checking your essay, it is worth doing a search for the word 'however' and checking in each case that you have not used the comma splice.

2.8.3 Another common error is confusion between the semicolon (;) and the colon (:). These marks of punctuation look similar, but have quite different functions. The semicolon is a weaker form of full stop. The colon, on the other hand, is shorthand for 'namely' or 'that is to say': it introduces material that follows on logically from what precedes. You also need a colon, not a semicolon, to introduce a quotation. Hence:

Virgil writes: *Arma virumque cano.*

not:

Virgil writes; *Arma virumque cano.*

In the second instance, you would not know that *Arma virumque cano* is by Virgil: all you would know is that Virgil is busy writing (because the semicolon is a weaker form of full stop).

2.8.4 Do not confuse 'it's' (= 'it is') and 'its' (= 'belonging to it').

2.8.5 If you have problems with punctuation, the book you need is R.L. Trask, *The Penguin Guide to Punctuation* (London, 1997). W. Strunk and E.B. White, *Elements of Style* (New York, 2010) and L. Truss, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation* (London, 2003) are also recommended.