What is a historical paper?

A paper is the traditional form of presenting historical research. A History Day paper is not simply a biography or a book report. It is a grammatically correct and well-written historical argument. Various types of creative writing (for example, fictional diaries, poems, etc.) are permitted, but must conform to all general and category rules.

The Basic Framework

- Must be completed as an individual. No group papers.
- No less than 1,500 words, no more than 2,500 words (about 6-10 pages).
- Contains citations to document work (footnotes, endnotes, or other internal documentation).
- Be sure to check the Contest Rulebook for additional requirements and guidelines.

Why Should I Choose the Paper Category?

Creating a History Day paper can be a rewarding experience and can be a successful way to communicate an argument about a topic. You will especially enjoy the paper category if you like to write and can express your ideas well through writing. The paper category is also great because you need very little visual evidence to support your argument, unlike a documentary. Since you cannot create a group paper for NHD, you also have to be willing to work alone.

It's important to remember that projects in the paper category must be completed and submitted in advance of History Day competitions, usually one to two weeks before the event takes place. This will give judges time to read your paper in advance of your interview. While it may be a challenge to complete the project before students in other categories, you will be far more relaxed than your fellow students the night before the competition.

History Day Paper Formatting

The National History Day Rulebook provides specific formatting guidelines for paper entries. Pay special attention to the following requirements:

- Papers must be typed, computer printed, or legibly handwritten in ink.
- Print papers on plain, white 8.5 x 11-inch paper with 1-inch margins on all sides.
- Pages must be numbered consecutively and double-spaced.
- Pages must be single-sided.
- Papers must be stapled in the top left corner and should not be enclosed in any cover or binder.
- The title page should list your title, name, and division/category only.
- No illustrations are permitted on the title page.
- It's best to use a font that is easy to read, such as Arial or Times New Roman, and an average-size font (10, 11, or 12 point).

It may look like quite a list of rules, but following these guidelines will help make sure your paper looks as polished and professional as possible!
Creating a paper for History Day is similar to other research papers you have written and generally falls into three basic steps:

1. **Collection of Information**
The process you will go through to collect information for a paper is the same as for all other History Day categories. The information you collect will form the basis for your entire paper. See the *NHD in Wisconsin Student Guide* for more information on research and note taking.

2. **Organization of Information**
The organization of information is especially important to create a successful historical paper. This begins with the analysis of your research and development of your argument or thesis statement. You can then begin to divide your research into different categories and draft an outline. Your outline is important as it is the roadmap for your entire project. Remember that each section in your outline (and in your final paper) should help support and prove your thesis.

3. **Presentation of the topic in an interesting and convincing way**
A historical research paper is more than just a story and is more interesting than just the presentation of one fact after another. To create a structured argument, each paragraph should have a topic sentence to focus the content of that paragraph. By following an outline that is connected to your thesis, you are going to build solid and convincing support for your argument. Additionally, what sorts of supporting materials can you incorporate into your paper? Are there quotes from historical actors that you can incorporate into your paper as evidence? Would a relevant map, photograph, or chart help your viewer to understand your argument? Finally, it is important to work through multiple drafts of your paper before you turn the final copy in to a competition or your teacher. Think critically about your paper and ask for feedback from others. Do you have a clear argument? Is your paper well-organized? Have you checked for spelling and grammatical errors?

**NOTE:** There are many books available on how to write research papers and you may find it helpful to look at one or more of them before you begin. Ask your history or English teacher to suggest some useful guides.

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**Frequently Asked Questions about the Paper Category**

**How do I count words in a historical paper?**
Each word or number in the text of the paper counts as one word. The word limit does not apply to: notes, annotated bibliography, illustration captions, and supplemental/appendix material.

**May I include an appendix in my paper?**
Yes, but appendix material must be directly referenced in the text of the paper. Extensive supplemental materials are inappropriate. Use of appendices should be very limited and may include photographs, maps, charts and graphs.

**May I include illustrations in my paper?**
Yes, illustrations (such as photographs, maps, charts, and graphs) can be included in your paper. However, it's important that all supplemental material is directly tied to the content of your paper and that illustrations effectively help you to prove your argument. They should not just be used for decoration.

**May I include other elements—such as an exhibit board or PowerPoint—with my paper?**
No, in choosing the paper category you are limited to submitting only your written paper and supporting materials (annotated bibliography and optional appendix). No other elements are permitted.

**Is creative writing permitted as a historical paper?**
Yes, you can submit various forms of creative writing, such as fictional diaries or poems. Remember, however, that all paper entries must still conform to category rules. Most importantly, all papers must convey and support a historical argument. Look at the NHD criteria for a paper to see how you can combine a creative style of writing with historical research and analysis.
Annotated Bibliographies and Citations

The annotated bibliography and the citations in your paper work together to show your reader the research that you have done and to demonstrate how this research has influenced your argument. Understanding bibliographies and citations and successfully incorporating them into a research paper will be a skill that is necessary through middle school, high school, college, and beyond.

Annotated Bibliographies

The bibliography is a list of sources you have consulted in creating your paper. This listing of every source that contributed to your project will be stapled to the end of your paper. Each source will be annotated, which is a brief description of how that source was useful to your research. Keep a working bibliography to track the sources you have used throughout your research process. It will be very challenging, if not impossible, to try and remember this information once you have finished your project.

Refer to the NHD in Wisconsin Student Guide and a style manual for MLA or Turabian (the accepted NHD citation styles) for additional information on creating this document.

- Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations
- Joseph Gibaldi, MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers

Citations

Citations are used within the paper to show the origins of ideas or quotations presented in the paper. History Day students can use several different styles of citations – footnotes, endnotes or parenthetical citations – depending on the citation style they choose (MLA or Turabian).

What is a citation?

Your historical paper will be created using the evidence and ideas created by other researchers or historical actors. Citations are a writer's explanations that ideas or quotations presented in the paper are not their own. Citations not only give credit to the originators of the ideas, but also point out the historical evidence in support of your argument about the past.

NOTE: The failure to acknowledge the origin of an idea or a quote is the equivalent to using someone else’s work and claiming it as your own. This is plagiarism and can have serious consequences!

Usually citations occur in three situations:

1. Quoting a Primary Source: An example of this would be including a selection from a speech or interview in your paper.
2. Quoting a Secondary Source: If you include a direct quotation in your paper from someone else (such as a book) you must cite it.
3. Paraphrasing a Secondary Source: Even if you change the author's ideas into your own words you must cite where you found this information when you include it in your paper.

NOTE: Footnotes and endnotes can also be used to provide further explanation for your paper. If there is an idea that requires additional explanation, but that explanation would interrupt the flow of your text, you can discuss it in a footnote. Please note, however, that extensive footnotes should not be used to get around the word limit.

What do I put in a citation?

Citations are brief and provide only enough information to guide the reader to the correct complete reference in the annotated bibliography.

- Parenthetical citations usually include the author's last name and page number.
- For the first time you reference a book in a footnote or endnote, you usually include the author's name, title, publishing information, date, and page. For each time you create a footnote or endnote for that source after that, your citation can be shorter, usually just the author’s last name and page number.

NOTE: The requirements and formatting for parenthetical citations, footnotes or endnotes will vary depending on the style guide you are using (MLA or Turabian) and the type of source you are referencing (book, article, interview, etc.). Be sure to refer to the appropriate guide for more information!
Where do I Place Citations?
You have several options for placement of citations depending on personal preference and the style manual you are using. You will select from one of the following:

- **Parenthetical Citations**: Parenthetical citations are placed in parentheses at the end of the sentence where they are referenced.
- **Footnotes**: For footnote citations, a superscript number is placed at the end of the sentence that refers to a citation at the bottom of the page. Most word processing programs can format footnotes automatically.
- **Endnotes**: For endnote citations, a superscript number is placed at the end of the sentence that refers to a citation on a separate page at the end of the paper. Most word processing programs can format endnotes automatically.

**NOTE**: While placing citations in parentheses in the text is permissible according to the MLA style rules, many readers prefer footnotes since they do not interrupt the flow of the text. Most History Day students will use footnotes or endnotes.

National History Day is an academic enrichment program and each year more than half a million students participate in schools across the country. National History Day (NHD) is a great opportunity for students to become historians as they investigate a topic in which they are interested. Historical research is important in helping students to develop skills that will help them achieve good scores on tests as well as develop habits they will need for the rest of their lives (Kasperek, Malone and Schock 2004, viii).

For students, the impact of the program goes far beyond school. According to Stephen Frese, 2006 NHD Grand Prize Winner, “It’s true: History Day is not just a day. It is an experience that can change your life.”

At this moment, students across the nation are creating documentaries, exhibits, papers, performances and web sites to share their ideas with others. The most popular presentations category is exhibits. Many students creating projects in this category work hard on the visual impact of their projects.


This sample page should help you understand how parenthetical citations, footnotes, and endnotes look in a paper. Remember that you should not use all three methods at once. You will pick one method, according your style guide, and use only that for your citations.
Find Your Voice
Using the right tone in your paper will make your paper as professional and polished as it can be. Your History Day paper is a type of formal writing, so use a formal voice and style for your paper. the way U rite sez alot 2 ur reader. Don’t use slang, informal abbreviations, jargon, or offensive language. Think about the mechanics and look of good writing: grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling and well formed paragraphs. Look at historical books or articles for models.

Focus on the Writing
In the paper category, your words are all you have to convey your argument and analysis to the judges. A well structured argument will go a long way to convey your ideas to the judges. You will likely have much more to say than you can include in just 2,500 words. You are going to have to think critically about what information is most relevant to your paper. Decide what evidence is most effective in establishing your thesis. In doing this, you will likely create multiple drafts of your paper before you are ready for your first competition.

Polish Your Work
Putting an extra polish on your work is especially important in the paper category. Since papers are read before the day of the competition, judges will likely look over your work multiple times. In addition to asking others to help you with proofreading, it’s a good idea for you to proof your paper from a printed copy, not just on the computer screen where it is much easier to miss errors. In addition, try reading your paper aloud. Sometimes your eyes don't notice a mistake until your ears tell you that something isn’t right.

Prepare in Advance
National History Day papers are submitted before the competition, usually with your registration materials. The version of the paper that you submit in advance is the final version that judges will use for the competition. Judges will already have read your paper by the time you come to the competition. This means that you will have to be finished with your final product about two weeks before the competition. Make sure that your timeline for completing a paper includes this variable.

The Interview is Important
Just because the judges have already read your paper doesn’t mean that the interview is unimportant. The judges will use the interview to answer questions they had about your paper, analysis, research, etc. The interview is also your chance to clarify your argument and show off all your hard work for the judges.

The Paper Stands Alone
When evaluating NHD papers, judges should be able to find all the information about your topic in your paper itself. The paper has to stand on its own. Have someone who has never seen your paper look at it (a friend, teacher, neighbor, etc.). Without saying anything, let them read through the entire paper. Then, ask them a few questions to see if you have communicated your argument clearly: What am I trying to prove in my paper? What evidence have I shown to support that argument? What do you like about my paper? What is confusing to you?
HANDOUT: ORGANIZING YOUR INFORMATION
FOR RESEARCH PAPERS

Research papers are the traditional way of organizing and presenting information. The best way to start your paper is to create an outline. It may be useful for you to physically write out your thoughts first, placing key events, points, and evidence on notecards and arranging them on a flat surface. This may give you a better idea about how exactly you would like to organize your paper.

Basic Outline

Introduction
- Use this section to briefly introduce your topic. Give the reader enough information to orient them about when and where your topic is happening. Don’t spend a great deal of time explaining everything. That is what the rest of your paper is for.
- Your thesis should be included in this first paragraph as well. It should help to outline the rest of your argument for the reader.

Body Paragraphs
- Each of these paragraphs should make a point that ties back to your thesis.
- Tell a story with your writing. You want the information to be segmented and arranged in a way that flows from one point to the next.
- You may want to consider tools like subtitles to orient the reader and make it easier to fill in your information as you write.

Conclusion
The conclusion of an effective paper restates (in a slightly different way than the thesis) your argument and summarizes your evidence. Every sentence in this paragraph needs to be powerful and use an active voice. This is your final impression – so make it a good one!

Other Notes to Consider When Writing

Physically arrange your work on flat surface. This often lets you see “the whole picture,” which normally can’t fit on a computer screen.

Don’t throw anything away! You may want to discard a lot of your work as you go because it doesn’t seem useful to you. However, often people who read early draft of your work may make suggestions to include a part you tossed away. Don’t create more work by throwing parts away prematurely.

Pay close attention to grammar, writing style, and citation. Avoid redundant sentence structures (starting sentences the same way) and use a thesaurus to spice up your writing.
6. Category Rules

6.1. Paper

A paper is a written format for presenting your historical argument, research, and interpretation of your topic’s significance in history.

**PAPER ELEMENTS**

- Your paper must be your original creation.
- Your paper must represent your historical research and analysis.
- Your paper must be grammatically correct.
- Your paper must conform to all general and category rules.
A2. **LENGTH REQUIREMENTS**

- Papers must contain between 1,500 and 2,500 words.
- Each word or number in the text of the paper counts as one word (Figure 3, p. 21).
- The following words **DO** count:
  - Text that you write, including captions, and words in footnotes/endnotes/internal documentation other than the citation
  - Quotes from any sources, whether primary or secondary
- Words in these components **DO NOT** count toward the limit:
  - Title page
  - Process paper
  - Annotated bibliography
  - Footnote/endnote/internal documentation citations
  - Primary source materials in appendices
- If relevant images, maps, graphs, or primary source materials are included, they must be placed in appendices, referenced in the text of the paper, and cited in the annotated bibliography. However, use of appendices must be very limited.

A3. **CITATIONS**

- Citations are used to credit the sources of specific ideas as well as direct quotations. See [nhd.org/annotated-bibliography](http://nhd.org/annotated-bibliography).
- You must use footnotes, endnotes, or internal documentation for your citations.
- Refer to Rule 20 (p. 20) for citation styles.

A4. **PREPARATION REQUIREMENTS**

- Your paper must be printed on plain, white 8.5 x 11-inch paper, double-sided, in 12-point font, with 1-inch margins on all sides. A4-sized paper will be accepted from international Affiliates.
- Pages must be numbered consecutively and double-spaced.
- Your title page, process paper, paper, and annotated bibliography **must be combined in this order and stapled in the upper left corner or secured with a clip**. Do not enclose the paper in a report cover, folder, three-ring binder, etc.
- See Figure 4 (p. 24) for an example of a properly formatted page from an NHD paper.

A5. **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

- Papers and required written materials must be submitted before the contest.
- Refer to your Contest Coordinator for submission instructions, including deadlines and number of copies required.
The second major issue debated at the Yalta Conference was the destiny of the Polish state. The Polish nation fluctuated between existence and partition throughout European history. After World War I, the Treaty of Versailles created the modern Polish state. In 1939, Germany demanded land and economic concessions from the nation, and the Polish government refused to concede to these demands. On March 31, 1939, Poland signed an agreement with Great Britain and France in which these nations promised to provide aid to Poland if attacked by Germany. On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland with two army groups while stationing the German navy to prevent a British attack from the sea.1 Warsaw was surrounded by September 17, and after heavy bombing raids, surrendered ten days later.

Poland was overrun quickly, “with a speed that astonished the rest of the world.”2 The Polish government and military leaders fled to France, and later to London. Poland remained occupied for most of the war. Soviet troops finally took control of Warsaw in January 1945. Poland was largely “written off at Yalta,” despite the fact that it fought with the Allied powers in exile.3

The representatives at the Yalta Conference made the following decision regarding the Polish state:

A new situation has been created in Poland as a result of her complete liberation by the Red Army. This calls for the establishment of a Polish Provisional Government...which is now functioning in Poland should therefore be reorganized on a broader democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from Poles abroad. This new Government should then be called the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity.4

As World War II began to shift in favor of the Allies, it became evident that several questions

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2 Stokesbury, A Short History of World War II, 75.