

Writing tips

Your reports should be typed, double-spaced, right-justified, 12-point font, 1-inch margins. This is a fairly standard format, and one that I require.

All works referenced must be listed at the end in a “Bibliography” or “Reference” section. For online sources, give the name of the page, the author (if you can find it), the URL, and the date accessed. For books, give the title, author, publisher, and date. And for articles (magazine or journal) give author, title, publication, date, and pages.

Credit for general ideas in your report can be give by simply listing the original work in your bibliography. Credit for specific facts, or revolutionary ideas should footnotes individually, noting which work in the bibliography is responsible for the fact or idea. Similarly, quoted passages must be referenced individually, noting which page of the source that the quote is from.

If you quote a long passage (a paragraph, say), set it apart from the double-spaced text of your report and use single spaces:

When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.¹

Also, try to make most of the words your own. Stringing together lots of quotes does not look as if you put much thought into your writing.

Finally, try to be specific. If you say “technologies will have to be perfected,” let the reader know which ones and why they are not perfect now. If you say “There will be another venture to the moon pretty soon,” state which country and when. If you talk about something that we haven’t discussed in class, you should define it. Pretend that your reader is a fellow classmate, not me. The reader therefore has the same knowledge as you, but anything new you will have to explain.

¹Thomas Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence*, Philadelphia, 1776.