



GUIDELINES FOR PRESENTATION AND PUBLICATION

Preparing for presentation

The Historical Society's seminars have become a major highlight for the year—and for good reason! We have earned a strong reputation for delivering engaging, well-researched, and professionally presented sessions. To help you contribute to this tradition, here are some practical tips to make your presentation truly shine.

History Bites

A new initiative for the annual seminar, is History Bites—10-minute presentations. These 'bites' must follow the same general rules as a full 20-minute presentation, as follows.

Speaking time limits

- The speaking time allowed for each seminar presentation is (10) **20 minutes**.
- These (10) 20 minutes include the half-minute the Chairperson will take to introduce you.
- To ensure that each of your fellow presenters have their full (10) 20 minutes to speak, you are urged not to exceed your time limit.

Observing time limits

- The Chair will ring a bell, indicating your **3 (three) minutes notice** that your time is nearly up.
- The Chair will cut off speakers who attempt to go over their time. You will not be allowed to continue speaking while the next person is waiting their turn to take the stage.

Smooth transition between speakers

To maintain audience interest, we need fast and smooth turnover of speakers.

- Each speaker should have provided their PowerPoint file by **Friday 25 September**
- Each speaker should be ready to present 5 minutes before the end of the previous presentation.

Guidelines for an effective presentation

Content matters—but so does delivery

While great delivery can sometimes mask weak content, poor delivery can easily undermine even the most brilliant research. **Aim for solid content and confident delivery.**

You're the expert!

- You've done the research—you know your topic better than anyone in the room.
- Speak with confidence and clarity to reassure your audience that they're in good hands.

Share your enthusiasm!

- Passion is contagious! If you're excited about your topic, your audience will be too.
- Let your energy and interest shine through your voice and body language.

Speak clearly and audibly

- Project your voice to reach the back of the room, especially important for audience members who may be hard of hearing.
- Avoid mumbling or rushing. Speak slowly and enunciate each word.

Look up! Engage with eye contact

- Look up from your notes regularly.
- Make eye contact around the room to create a sense of personal connection.
- If reading from a script, do so in a way that still feels conversational.

Use PowerPoint wisely

- Do not read aloud what appears on your slides, your audience can do that themselves.
- Use slides to support your talk, not to replace it.
- Do not display a slide containing huge slabs of text, long quotes, over-long picture captions, more than 3 bullet points, or more than 2 images, the audience can't read it all in the time given.
- Use 'action' images, especially those showing people—the audience love to focus and explore an image whilst listening.
- A slide should contain no more than a dozen (12) words—the audience should be able to read the text of any slide at a glance.

Stay focused

- **Stick to your script** and avoid going off-topic.
- Avoid the temptation to make asides, give further explanations, and indulge in digressions. They can eat into your time and disrupt your flow.
- Staying focused helps you stay within your (10) 20-minute limit and keeps your audience engaged.

Practice makes perfect—how to present in 10 or 20 minutes.

- Print your presentation out and rehearse! **Read it aloud** (ideally in front of a mirror or a friend) and **use a stopwatch**. If reading takes you more than (10) 20 minutes in rehearsal, it is too long, and you must reduce your word count.

Hint: four printed pages of single-spaced text in Times New Roman 12-point can be comfortably delivered in 20 minutes.

How to reduce your word count for presentation

- Read your document carefully. Eliminate everything that is not necessary: words, phrases, sentences, even whole paragraphs. When you've reduced it, rehearse it again against the stopwatch. You may have to repeat this process several times before you can deliver it within your (10) 20-minute time limit.
- Your text will be the right length when you can read it aloud within (10) 20 minutes—comfortably with no racing!
- Practice until you can deliver it smoothly, even without notes.

The effort breakdown

Think of your seminar preparation like this:

20% → researching your topic

20% → writing your paper

60% → preparing and delivering your presentation

Delivery is the biggest part of the effort, and it's where your hard work truly comes to life.

Your presentation is your opportunity to share your knowledge, passion, and insights with others. With thoughtful preparation and confident delivery, you'll not only inform—you will inspire.



Writing for publication

The Historical Society publishes the seminar papers in its annual journal, *St John History*.

Even the best seminar paper needs editorial attention. Depending on the length and fluency of the papers, our editors may have to exercise editorial discretion to meet writing and style standards. Ensure that your essay is clear, clean and coherent to minimise editing.

Please note, neither your presentation speaking notes nor your PowerPoint slides with captions are adequate for the editorial process. For publication, please provide the 'essay' you wrote before adapting to PowerPoint.

Basic requirements

Your essay should be:

- submitted as a Word.docx document (*not* a PDF)
- images and accompanying captions can be included in the body of your essay.
- 6,000 words maximum extent.

References and bibliography

- Include references only in the main body of your essay. It doesn't matter what reference style you use (author/date in text, footnotes or endnotes), but they must be consistent in style, throughout.
- Image captions — DO NOT include consecutive reference numbering! Provide the full citation with the caption, and list the reference in the Bibliography.
- Include a bibliography with full citation for each work: author, title, publication place, publisher, date.

Guidelines for writing clearly

Writing an effective introduction and organising your essay clearly can make a big difference in how your work is received. Here's a helpful guide to get you started.

Start with the Big Picture

- Have a good idea of where you are going. Begin by setting the scene: what do we already know?
- Then, narrow your focus: what's missing or less understood?

For example: We know a lot about XYZ; however, there is very little known about ABC. This paper will examine ABC in terms of A1, A2, B, C1 and C2.

This approach helps the reader understand your direction and how you will be dealing with A, B and C.

Know where you're going

- Before you begin writing, outline your key points.
- Typically, the order of presentation reflects importance. Start with your strongest point (A), then move to supporting ideas (A1, A2), followed by B, C1, and C2.
- The number of points isn't as important as how well you explore them.

Structure each section clearly

- Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence that introduces the subject.

For example: A is the most neglected aspect of what we know about women in the ancient Order, largely due to A1 and A2.

Follow with:

- evidence to support your claim of neglect
- references to support your claim
- further explanation of A1 and A2 to support your claim.

Use references thoughtfully

It is an early writing mistake to read an article, get excited by it, and then write ideas that usually come directly from that author!

- Avoid starting paragraphs with an author's name. This suggests the author is the subject, not your idea.

- Instead, read widely, take notes, and reflect:
 - What do I think all this literature means?
 - Are these the ultimate references or are older references still relevant?
 - Has newer literature built on or challenged earlier work?

Your next paragraph might start like this: B is also an important area of research in which only a few, more recent historians have done any work with...

Present your ideas objectively

Keep your writing formal and focused on the subject, not the writer.

Unfortunately, unless you're an eminent historian, the reader is not interested in your opinion or your journey in finding things out.

- Avoid using first-person singular (e.g. 'I think', 'I believe').
- Reference your facts.
- Use more universal phrasing when making suppositions or inferences. For example: 'It could be readily concluded that...This character may have been overwhelmed by...'

Writing the conclusion

- Let the reader know that you are no longer introducing any new material but about to summarise your findings. For example you could start with: 'In conclusion... To summarise... The value of this paper has been...'
- Re-state your key findings and highlight what's new or important, especially in relation to your topic (e.g., the Order today).
- These are *your* thoughts, deductions and conclusions. However, your writing will be more confident, if you use universal language—avoid writing in first person/singular. For example: 'This paper has shown ...' rather than 'I think ...' or 'I believe ...'.

Illustrations

Because the journal is printed, we must limit the number of illustrations in each essay (you may have used many to illustrate your seminar presentation. Please provide:

- up to six illustrations in the body of the text, at or near the relevant copy
- captions for these illustrations, including the artist's/photographer's name (if known), medium, date and name/s of copyright holder/s.

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