



World Politics and International Relations
Department of Political and Social Sciences
Università degli Studi di Pavia

Essay Writing: general guidelines

The following is a general guide to essay writing for students of World Politics and International Relations. The advice contained here is valid across different disciplines and is endorsed by those WPIR teachers who require an essay as part of their exam.

Bear in mind, however, that different styles can suit different disciplines. For example, for the essay in History of International Relations you are expected to adopt a historical approach, whereas for the essay in Comparative Politics you are expected to adopt a political science approach. Individual teachers may provide more specific recommendations. If you have any doubts, you should consult them directly.

1. Research Question

A good essay should try to address a research question.

When selecting your essay topic you should first reflect on why this particular topic interests you and why you have chosen this subject. You need to think about what, exactly, you are trying to demonstrate through your piece of written work and what particular points you intend to make. One way of looking at this is to ask, “What problem am I trying to solve?” Another is to ask, “What new understanding am I trying to provide?”

The research question should be present in the background throughout the paper, and the essay should be structured in a way that makes clear how each and every section plays a necessary part in providing an answer. One way of making this clear is simply to state at the beginning of each section the way in which that section contributes to answering the research question, and then to go on to demonstrate it in the analysis that follows.

You should think of your paper as essentially an attempt to answer your research question. One way of forcing yourself to do so is to make the research question the *title* of your paper.

2. Essay layout

Section	Task	A very rough guide to length
Cover page	Includes the title of the paper, the student's name, the paper's word length, and a declaration that the report is the original work of the student (see point 6, below).	Cover page

Summary	A single paragraph should briefly describe the purpose of your analysis, and the conclusions you have reached. It is advisable to write this section <i>last</i> , when the main body of the essay has been completed. Note that this is not an introduction to your paper but a snapshot summary.	One short paragraph
Introduction	Begin your paper by describing the research problem or question and why it is important or interesting. The introduction is critically important for any kind of paper or report that you write. It needs to be focused and to define what is being done in the paper. You need to explain why your research is interesting and ideally refer briefly to existing literature, thereby informing the reader about how your report fits into the established literature. At the end of the introduction signpost your reader how you are going to develop your essay, and state your main arguments.	1 page
Background	In this section you need to build up your arguments leading to the research question you are focusing on. The research question is typically narrow and well defined, whereas the background section describes the context in which the research question is placed. This is the place to make references to the literature, to theories and/or to the policy debate. Needless to say, you need to obtain a certain level of knowledge of the topic you are dealing with in order to make this section successful and you need to demonstrate that in this section.	2 - 3 pages
Analysis	Develop the issue you have chosen to analyze, providing sources (secondary and primary). In the case of a comparative analysis it can be useful to consider the case studies separately, in separate paragraphs.	2 - 3 pages
Conclusion	Derive the conclusion from the analysis you have put forward, being careful to connect all your final claims to the evidence you have provided in your analysis. The conclusion must be strictly supported by the analysis. (Note that a conclusion, so described, is something more than a mere summary of what you have said in the main body of the paper.)	2 - 3 pages
Bibliography	You are required to include a bibliography at the end of the paper. It is important to use a recognized, coherent system for citations. Examples are provided below. All the books and articles cited within the paper must be present in the bibliographic list. You may also include any other works you have consulted. The list of references in the bibliography should be in alphabetical order, according to authors' surnames.	

3. Format

For a clear and legible format, the following are recommended:

- Body of the Text: Times New Roman 12
- Notes: Times New Roman 9 or 10
- Quotations within the text: return (right and left) 1 cm, Times New Roman 10
- Multiple line spacing 1,5

4. Bibliographical references

Books

Surname, Name, *Title* (italics), place of publication, name of the publisher, year (first edition in brackets)

E.g. (1) - ABERNATHY, Thomas P., *The South in the New Nation, 1789-1819*. Baton Rouge, LouisianaStateUniversity Press, 1961.

E.g. (2) - ADAMS, Willi Paul, *The First American Constitutions. Republican Ideology and the making of state constitutions in the Revolutionary Era*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2000 (ed. or. *Republikanische Verfassung und bürgerliche Freiheit*, Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, Darmstadt un Neuwied, 1973).

If there is more than one author, you should indicate all their surnames and names separated by commas.

E.g. (3) - ALEXANDER, Thomas B., BERINGER, Richard E., *The Anatomy of the Confederate Congress. A study of the influence of Member Characteristics on Legislative Voting Behavior, 1861-1865*, Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press, 1972.

Articles in Academic Journals

Surname, name, "Title of the article" (in inverted commas), *Journal name* (italics), volume, number (year in brackets), initial and final page of the article.

E.g. (4) BLADEK, John David, "'Virginia is Middle Ground': The Know Nothing Party and the Virginia Gubernatorial Election of 1855" in *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 106, n. 1 (1998), pp. 35-70.

E.g. (5) Escobar, Roberto, "Simbolo, spazio, ordine", *Filosofia politica*, vol. 9, n. 3 (1995), pp. 409-424.

Newspaper articles

Surname, Name, "Title of the article" (inverted commas), *Newspaper title* (italics), date of publication, initial and final page.

E.g. (6) Tettamanti, Franco, "Buffalo Bill e gli indiani alla conquista dell'Arena", *Corriere della Sera*, 21 December 2005, p. 9.

Book chapters and Encyclopedia entries

Surname, Name, "entry title/chapter title/essay title" (in inverted commas), in Surname, Name of the editor/s (ed./eds), *Book title* (italics), country/city of the publisher, name of the publisher, year, initial and final page of the entry/chapter/essay.

E.g. (7) CAUTHER, Charles E., "The Coming of the Civil War", in LINK, Arthur S., REMBERT, Patrick W., (eds), *Writing Southern History. Essays in Historiography in Honor of Fletcher M. Green*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1965, pp. 224-248

E.g. (8) MATTEUCCI, Nicola, "Sovranità", in BOBBIO, Norberto, MATTEUCCI, Nicola, PASQUINO, Gianfranco (eds), *Dizionario di politica*, Torino, Utet, 1976, pp. 1079-1088

Web addresses

You should cite a web address only in two cases:

- in the case of an academic journal that publishes *only* online. Cite the article as above, but add the web address at the end of the citation.
- in the case of a non-academic website that you have consulted and/or quoted from. Cite the web address followed by a brief description and the date the web site was consulted.

E.g. (9) www.royal.gov.uk, official site of the British Monarch (accessed, 14 April 2015).

5. Footnotes

The same criteria adopted for the bibliography must be used for the footnotes, bearing in mind the following further advice:

The first time you quote from a book or an essay you have to write all the bibliographical information (as specified above), except that the initial letter of the author's name (or the first name(s) in full) should precede his/her surname. Where necessary, you should supply specific page references for quotations given in the main body of your text.

Examples:

Books

T. P. ABERNATHY, *The South in the New Nation, 1789-1819*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1961, p. 7.

Journals

J. D. BLADEK, "Virginia is Middle Ground': The Know Nothing Party and the Virginia Gubernatorial Election of 1855", *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 106, n. 1 (1998), pp. 35-70, at p. 68.

Newspapers

F. TETTAMANTI, "Buffalo Bill e gli indiani alla conquista dell'Arena", *Corriere della Sera*, 21 December 2005, p. 9.

Where you subsequently refer again to the same book, article, essay etc., you should not cite all the bibliographical information again, but only the author and title, adding the expression "cit." to refer to the previous complete citation, and the relevant page number.

E.g.

D. FISICHELLA, *Lineamenti di scienza politica*, cit., p. 22.

Where a subsequent footnote refers to the very same page of the same book/essay etc., in that subsequent footnote you should simply use the conventional expression “Ibidem” (italic)

E.g.

¹⁴ D. FISICHELLA, *Lineamenti di scienza politica*, cit., p. 7.

¹⁵Ibidem.

If two subsequent footnotes refer to different pages from the very same book/essay etc., in the second footnote you should use the conventional expression Ivi , followed by the page number.

E.g.

¹⁴ D. FISICHELLA, *Lineamenti di scienza politica*, cit., p. 7.

¹⁵Ivi, p. 8.

6. Original work (vs plagiarism)

All submitted written work must be the original work of the student(s) named on the cover page.

You should include the following declaration on the cover page. If the piece of written work is a group assignment, then every member of the group must sign it:

In submitting this assignment:

1. I/We declare that this written assignment is my/our own work and does not include (i) material from published sources used without proper acknowledgment or (ii) material copied from the work of other students.
2. I/We declare that this assignment has not been submitted for assessment in any other course at any university.
3. I/We have a photocopy and electronic version of this assignment in my/our possession.

All submitted written work is checked using the University’s anti-plagiarism software. Students who submit copied work for an official University exam will be graded zero and referred to the University’s Disciplinary Board.