

The Structure of a Historical Research Manuscript

Introduction / Historical Context

Short 2-6 paged brief historical summary of relevant background information. Then a brief 'thesis' statement structured similar to the following: "I will argue _____. I intend to support my contention through the use of _____ (most relevant primary sources) as well as an extensive discussion of _____ (secondary source camps).

Historical Analysis & (or) Data

Sometimes labeled as simply 'Data,' this section introduces all primary sources utilized by the paper (including those referenced by secondary sources). Ideally, no new data will be introduced past this section.

Scholarly Debate & (or) Debate

Sometimes labeled as simply 'Debate,' this section deals with all scholars, academics, and other individuals with opinions and/or arguments relevant to the research topic. Summarize the arguments of these secondary sources and, if possible, group them into camps organized by the similarities within their arguments. Though some refer to this section as historiography, it is increasingly rare for an academic paper to label this section with such terminology.

Discussion & Theory (sometimes)

The Discussion section refers to the mediation process; each argument (or ideally, each camp) must be discussed in reference to the others (hence, why the term mediator is used to refer to the author of the paper). A side should be taken and furthered, else, a new theory should be proposed (in which case, the section is named 'Discussion & Theory.' It is sometimes the case that authors will choose to create a standalone 'Theory' section following the Discussion section.

Conclusion

The Conclusion is not where you wrap up your argument. The argument you have made has already been concluded in the previous section(s). The conclusion is where you very briefly summarize your claims and, more importantly, explain the impact of your research paper on the future of the academic community (i.e., how your research should change the way people think about that particular topic). Furthermore, you should identify areas where further research can be conducted (i.e., where your claims fall short / where holes in your argument exist).