Formal Writing Guide

Use indented paragraphs rather than leaving space after paragraphs.

No personal pronouns in formal writing for me. Especially “you” and “your” or “we” and “our” and “us.” Also no “I” and “my” and “me.”

You must give your essay a title specific enough that it will be utterly wrong for any other student’s essay. *Your title may not include the words “history” or “essay.”*

No putting “**many**” and then not putting ANY specific examples. “Many” is a promise of specifics. If you use it, you have to deliver on that promise, and with more than just one specific fact. So every time you promise me “many” I want three. Give specific details instead of making broad, general comments that are hard to support with evidence. Names, places, dates, percentages, amounts.

No use of words like “essay,” “topic” or “paragraph” in essays for me. No use of “portray.”

No use of “Firstly,” “Secondly,” “Thirdly,” “In conclusion” or “To conclude.”

First sentences in paragraphs “focus” the paragraph by subtly presenting the topic of the paragraph. Even just naming the topic while starting to talk about it will do this.

Do not use just the first name of famous people. Either use both of their names, or just their last name.

No contractions (e.g. can’t, won’t, didn’t, doesn’t)

Strong sentences in English start with who is doing whatever the thing you are discussing. So, names tend to go at the start, rather than the middle or end of strong, formal sentences.

Quotations go in quotation marks, with the person’s name coming in the sentence, right before you start quoting. They do not go in italics. Do not start with the quotation mark. Write who said it/where the quote is coming from first before adding the quotation mark and quoting in that same sentence.

Use statements rather than rhetorical questions. So, no “Where would Canada be without the Charter of Rights and Freedoms?” (Instead, clearly state *exactly* where Canada would be without it.)

Every single paragraph must have something other than stuff from off the top of your head. Each one requires specifics. Things like names, places, dates, events and people. Also specific quotes, word for word, from people or written sources.

Include a Works Cited Page (which is its own page) at the end of your essay, with full bibliographic information for each source you used. Call it “Works Cited.” Use Wikipedia or History.ca if you like, but give the whole URL of the specific Wikipedia or History.ca page.
(e.g. Labor Laws and Issues. (n.d.). Retrieved February 09, 2016, from https://www.usa.gov/labor-laws)

Use <http://www.citationmachine.net/apa/cite-a-website> to create your bibliographic information.