

# Top 10 Tips

from a History Undergraduate



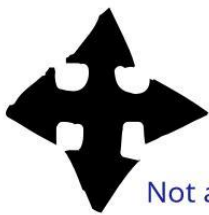
## 1. Choose something you love

You only do one thesis: seize the opportunity to do something that really interests you.



Go down wrong routes to find the right ones: be prepared to change course in the early days.

Pore over footnotes and bibliographies - and take notes!



## 2. Get the scope right

Big enough to be interesting,  
Small enough to be manageable

Not all theses need archives: published sources are more important for some topics

Remember that you can use translated sources.

You are also allowed to write an edition of a source

## 3. Archival awareness

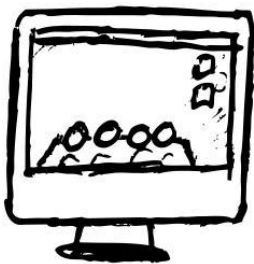
Where? how long? accommodation or just travel?

The Long Vac can be best: more time, travel grants, etc.

Be prepared: hours, closures, pencils, ID, letter from tutor, camera

Phone / email ahead

Make the most of the archivist's knowledge and talk to them



## 4. Online resources

Archives and libraries aren't everything: look online first (EEBO, ECCO, Time Digital Archive and 300+ more subscriptions in OxLIP+)  
Use the British Library, WorldCat and the US Library of Congress catalogues - great for locating primary and secondary sources.

Feel the love for SOLO subject searches

Use COPAC to checking holdings in other UK libraries (possibility of inter-library loans)

## 5. Bibliography

Start this ASAP.

Learn the Faculty's citation form for books and archives before doing anything!

Use software if you want

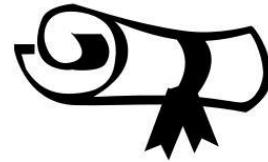
Psychologically, a long list of books read can be of immense value when you're staring at a blank page.



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## 6. Note-taking



It really pays to be anal about this - but don't kill the trees

If in doubt, attribute everything and keep the quotation marks, make sure page/ folio numbers are noted down; synthesise when you're writing up.

What works for you (e.g. card index)

Typed notes are great for teaching searching (consider software e.g. OneNote)



## 7. Computing

Find out what IT Services can do for you.

They offer computer support, a wide range of courses and great facilities.

Single-Sign On (SSO) makes things far easier, but the internet can be temperamental.

### BACK UP YOUR WORK!!!!!!

## 8. When to write



Write when you feel ready, but leave plenty of time.

Be clear: make your argument apparent and don't assume too much knowledge.

Let your sources guide you to new ideas and conclusions - these will be more interesting / truthful than your preconceptions!

But don't turn it into chunks of primary sources interspersed with commentary.



## 9. Making contact

Don't be afraid to ask tutors, librarians and graduates. They are only you, but older.

They all are a great source of random knowledge and reading suggestions.

Don't be afraid to go outside Oxford. Most people will talk to you.

But think for yourself before asking: you will get more out of it that way.

## 10. Getting out more



Come Hilary Term, you may well have Nothing Else To Do.

So go out, play sport, see plays (but probably don't do one).

Rule your work, don't let it rule you.

Finals are tiring (understatement) - save your energies.



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