

TUTOR STUDY TIPS: HISTORY

Concepts for History: Ideas that can help you better understand the subject

The Big Picture (*before you concentrate on the specific details*)

The big picture is the **main idea** behind any topic or subject. Students who do not focus on this will instead try to learn the details first. This prevents them from getting a **broad understanding**. It is important to first understand what the central idea is and keep it in mind at all times. During lectures/readings, always place events, facts, and details within the context of “the big picture.”

Cause and Effect (*causality: how one thing leads to another*)

Causality is when a person, place, or thing brings about the *making of* another person, place, or thing. The cause is **responsible** for the effect and the effect is **dependent** on the cause. History is a series of events connected together through cause and effect. Every class, chapter, lecture, and discussion are the individual parts (or episodes) that make up this story of causality.

Chronology (*the timeline*)

When looking at a string of historical events, it is helpful to keep in mind **the order** in which they took place. Don't stress too much about memorizing exact dates right away. Begin with having a close idea of the **decade** or **century** when a certain event took place. This is helpful when trying to understand what comes first, what comes second, and then what comes last.

Politics, Economy, Society (*history can be broken down into three broad categories*)

All societies in history have some sort of **government**; this is called politics. Focus on how any government serves its people (good or bad). The economy is all about **money**, who has it, who does not have it, and how it functions in the world. And society is about **people**, everyday people with everyday concerns. Society includes ethnicity, culture, class, religion, language, etc.

Practicing History: Strategies on how to approach the subject successfully

Read the Textbook (*before class*)

A good amount of reading is *required* for history. Read the chapter *before* the lecture. This will **enable you to focus** on the important parts. It is imperative to approach the readings **with intent** (not to just to “get it over with”); read with a purpose. Take your time and just read.

Taking Notes (*work on your note taking efficiency*)

Before class, complete assigned readings and take some notes (know material). Then add to your reading notes new information and insights from class. **Pay attention** to topics the professor emphasizes. **Title and date** lectures, and keep your notes organized (to use as study aids for exams or essays).

Flashcards (*to retain key information*)

After “the big picture” comes the important **memorization** of names, events, places, etc. In those situations, flashcards can be a great tool for memorizing certain pieces of information AND are very useful to **test your level of retention** (which will be great practice for exam day).

Who, What, When, Where, and WHY?

Memorizing key terms for quizzes and exams involve questions like: *Who, What, When, Where*. But the question of **Why** is the most important. What is the cause (or reason) behind any given historical situation? There is *always* a cause. Your professors call this inquiry **“critical analysis.”**

HISTORY STUDY STRATEGY EXAMPLES

THE BIG PICTURE

The Cold War (March 1947 - December 1991)

The Korean War (1950-1953) was fought between North and South Korea. North Korea was supported by the *communist* Soviet Union while South Korea was supported by the *democratic* United States. The Vietnam War (1955-1975) was fought between North and South Vietnam. North Vietnam was supported by the Soviet Union while South Vietnam was supported by the United States. The Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) occurred when American missiles in Italy and Turkey were matched by Soviet missiles in Cuba. So, what is the big picture here? The Cold War was, in essence, the United States and the Soviet Union “indirectly” fighting each other for control of the world after World War II.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Cause: the Mexican American War  Effect: the Civil War

When the U.S. took half of Mexico’s territory, the tension between the *pro-slavery* states of the *South* and the *anti-slavery* states of the *North* escalated (the South wanted to expand slavery while the North wanted to limit slavery). The addition of new land made this conflict worse and was a cause of the Civil War.

CHRONOLOGY

Stone Age (7,000BC-2,300BC)  Bronze Age (2,300BC-700BC)  Iron Age (700BC-43AD)
Declaration of Independence (1776)  The Constitution (1787)  Bill of Rights (1791)

POLITICS, ECONOMY, SOCIETY

What caused the French Revolution?

(Politics) 1. Poor leadership of Louis XVI. 2. Enlightenment philosophers on the “role of government.”

(Economy) 1. Involvement in expensive wars. 2. The price of bread. 3. Tax burdens on the poor.

(Society) 1. Inequality in the class system, the “Estates.” 2. Rise of the middle-class, the “Bourgeoisie.”

FLASHCARDS

Front:

**Branches of the US
Government**

Back:

3 branches:

1. Legislative: Makes laws (Congress = Senate + House of Representatives)
2. Executive: Carries out laws (president, vice president, Cabinet, most federal agencies)
3. Judicial: Evaluates laws (Supreme Court & other courts)

<https://www.usa.gov/branches-of-government>

WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY

Who: Saul of Tarsus **What:** Christian Apostle **When:** mid-40s to mid-50s AD **Where:** Asia Minor/Europe

Why: Spread the teachings of Jesus Christ, founded several Christian communities, a leader among the first generation of Christians, the most important person (after Jesus) in the history of Christianity.