



Reading and activities list for History

Checklist of Actions for Oxbridge preparation

- Complete the course and college research booklet which covers entry requirements for your course (e.g. admissions tests during interviews). Use it to help you make informed choices.
- Respond and maintain email contact with your OMS Mentor and do not hesitate to ask questions which may help your Oxbridge preparation.
- Read British broadsheets such as The Daily Telegraph, The Independent or The Guardian preferably every day (if not feasible, then at weekends). Think critically about what you have read; what issues are raised?; What assumptions are being made? What information is being relied on to draw which conclusions? How would you frame a counter-argument?
- Make note of subject-related terminology to look up definitions with the aim of working them into future academic discussions on your chosen Oxbridge course.
- Keep a "Learning Log". Note down (i) book titles/ articles (ii) author (iii) your thoughts, feelings and observations (iv) context and relevance of the book/article (v) whether you agree with what you have read.

Subject-specific preparation

- Undertake preliminary reading of books relating to modern History. Choose from among the following:
 - *What Is History? by E H Carr*
 - *The Practice of History by Geoffrey R. Elton*
 - *In Defence of History by Richard J. Evans*
 - *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century by Mark Mazower*
 - *The Pursuit of History by John Tosh*
 - *Roundhead Reputations: The English Civil War and the Passions of Posterity by Blair Worden*
 - *History: a very short introduction by J.H. Arnold*
 - *The Pursuit of Glory: Europe 1648-1815 by Tim Blanning*
 - *The Historian's Craft by Marc Bloch*
 - *History and Social Theory by Peter Burke*
 - *In Churchill's Shadow: Confronting the Past in Modern Britain by David Cannadine*
- Read some the following, researching into the historical context in which they were written:
 - *Histories by Herodotus*
 - *Histories by Tacitus*
 - *Politics by Aristotle*
 - *Beowulf (any English translation)*
 - *The Prince by Niccolo Machiavelli*
 - *Utopia by Thomas More*
 - *The Art of War by Sun-tzu*
 - *Candide by Voltaire*
 - *Primo Levi If This If Man (I would say this was essential reading.)*
 - *Animal Farm by George Orwell*



- Broaden your reading of history by reading *The Ascent of Money: A Financial History of the World* by Professor Niall Ferguson. This is an excellent summary of the historical development of capitalism, along with a summary of past crashes and how they compare to the current situation.
- Also by the same author (Niall Ferguson), try *Empire: How Britain made the Modern World*. The book provides a synoptic survey of the British empire since the 17th century, as an arresting argument about why it arose, and how it fell. Ferguson's emphasis throughout is on the pursuit of economic profit and military might.
- Identify three historical figures of most interest to you. Be sure you can articulate why they are interesting and describe their impact on history.
- Mini-project: Use the PESC model to consider the Political, Economic, Social and Cultural impact of each of the following on world history.
 1. Roman Conquest
 2. Norman Conquest
 3. Hundred Years War
 4. Reformation
 5. Tudors and Stuarts
 6. English Civil War and Interregnum Period
 7. Renaissance
 8. Enlightenment
 9. French Revolution
 10. 1848 Revolution(s)
 11. Russian Revolution
 12. World War I & World War II
- Consider subscribing to History Today or the BBC's History magazines. In the meantime, visit them online and take note of interesting articles and their authors.
- Also view www.history.com which is the cable TV history channel's website.
- Know your chronology and geography. To accurately date and place historic events, keep the *Penguin Atlas of World History* on your shelf and a hand-written chronology of historical events you have studied on your wall.
- Try to attend at least one local lecture, event or workshop on a historic theme (you can find one by internet), so you can hear real historians talk.
- Keep in mind that much of history is essentially the politics of the past, which is why you may be asked at your interview to compare past and present. Reading the English broadsheets will help you do this, but if you mention a point based on a newspaper article, try to also recall the author.
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- To hone your debating skills for your Oxbridge interview, watch "Question Time" on BBC2. Do also listen to BBC Radio4's "World at One" or "The PM Programme", which explain the background to the news. You can catch programmes you missed online on <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/> What conclusions would you draw? How would you frame a counter-argument?