

5 Pieces of Advice for Contest Season

(1) Re-evaluate your thesis statement—Is it a good roadmap?

A roadmap tells you where you're going—does your thesis tell your reader where this project is taking them? Make sure your key points are in your thesis and everything in your project connects back to your thesis.

(2) Use your feedback!

Listen to what your teacher, peers, or judges think you can improve upon. It is your decision whether or not to make changes, but be open to feedback! We all want to help you make the best project possible!

(3) Keep hunting for primary sources.

You began NHD in the “research phase” and have since moved to “presentation phrase.” But don't let your research phase fizzle out during the contest season! Use the bibliographies of your secondary sources to continue tracking down new primary sources, and see where they lead you. Additional research is one of the best ways to improve the quality of your project.

(4) Remember to place your topic in historical context.

Before you get into the juicy details of your topic, let your reader know the setting. Explain any *relevant* events, people, or things prior to your topic AND then how your topic shaped key events, people, or things later on (yes, even within the past 20 years if there has been new developments). We want to see the big picture! What happened before, and what kind of *changes* happened after.

(5) Finish with a conclusion.

Don't just stop writing when you reach the end of your word/space/time limit. Tie your thoughts back to your main claim without bringing in a new idea. Your concluding statement should be very similar to your thesis and give the reader a nice recap.