

Tips for the PLS 326 Presidential Profile *or*
“Five ways that you will almost certainly mess up on this paper!”
Spring 2018

TIP #1: Follow directions

The prompt has specific directions about the formatting of page numbers, margins, font, font size, subheadings, etc.,. If you do not follow these simple instructions, I’ll assume you’re not putting much effort into the paper.

TIP #2: Make an argument

The paper is asking you to make an argument regarding the presidential administration you have been assigned. Make an argument throughout the entire paper. Do not forget at any point that this is the purpose of the entire paper.

TIP #3: Cite properly

I have told you that I expect that you will do a fair amount of library research on your presidential administration. This includes physical books in the library, but also journal articles from scholarly sources such as *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Use proper citation styles, both in-text and in your bibliography. If you are completely lost here, use MLA style for books and articles:

Books

James, Henry. *The Ambassadors*. Rockville: Serenity, 2009. Print.

Articles

Manning, Paul. “Television, ‘Nixon’ and Drugs Education.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 20.2 (2013): 120-30.

In-text parenthetical citations should look something like this:

Johnson argues this point (213-214) *or* The point had already been argued (Johnson 213-214).

TIP #4: Capitalize properly

Capitalizing the presidency. When writing about the presidency, it is difficult to remember all the rules for capitalization. There are many, so be careful!

- *Proper nouns*. When attached to a person, title, place, or organization, *only* is the word ‘president’ capitalized (e.g., President Donald Trump, President of the United States, President Barack Obama). Otherwise ‘president’ and ‘presidency’ should remain lowercase.

Applies to the other two branches and the Constitution. Inevitably, you will feel compelled to write about the other branches and the Constitution. The same rules about proper nouns still apply.

- *When to capitalize.* Again, when it is attached to a person, title, place, or organization (e.g., Speaker of the House, Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, Congress, Supreme Court, the Constitution)
- *When to not.* When you're using words like 'congressional', 'judiciary', 'legislative', 'constitutional'. These aren't attached to a person, title, place, or organization.

TIP #5: A pet peeve, don't use contractions!

Academics explicitly avoid the use of contractions (e.g., 'can't', 'shouldn't', 'won't', 'it's'). Contractions indicate an informal style of writing you should attempt to avoid. Instead, write out the full contraction (e.g., 'cannot', 'should not', 'will not', 'it is').