

What is History?

Definition - history - the study of human development patterns over time.

History is not the study of facts, or even just the past. It is the study of patterns. Yes, you **do** need to know some facts - historical facts are the building blocks of history. Just as it would be impossible to build a brick wall without bricks, you can't figure out a historical problem without knowing anything about that problem! All historians are concerned with the big questions:

- < Why did something happen?
- < What effect did (or could) an event have on the future?
- < What connections are there between events?
- < Can a **trend** (*direction of change*) be recognized?
- < Can predictions be made?

When it comes down to it, the **goal** of history is **to provide knowledge of the past to understand the present and predict the future.**

History is **not** a dead issue. Every decision you make is based upon some occurrence in the past. Take, for example, the selection of a high school course. What possible historical facts might influence a simple task like selecting a course?

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So, just as you use history to make personal decisions, governments and societies make decisions based upon their past. Look at any ongoing news story. Ask yourself, Why is this happening? What you will quickly find is that some knowledge of history is necessary to understand.