

Creating Exhibit Entries (adapted from National History Day Formats)

Exhibits are designed to display visual and written information on topics in an attractive and understandable manner. They are similar to exhibits found in a museum. People walking by should be attracted to an exhibit's main idea and, therefore, stop to learn more about the topic. To be successful, an exhibit must create an effective balance between visual interest and historical explanation.

The most common form of exhibit entry is a three-panel display. This style is the least complicated to design and build but is still a very effective way to present information.

Here are some tips for this style:

- * Be sure the title is the main focus of the center panel.
- * Use the center panel to present the main ideas.
- * The side panels are best used either to compare issues about the topic or to explain related detail.
- * Artifacts or other materials may also be placed on the table between the side panels.
- * 500 Word text limit.

Labeling

The labels used for the title and main ideas are very important because they direct the viewer's eye around the exhibit. One way to make labels stand out is to have the writing on a light-colored piece of paper with a darker background behind it. This can be done with construction paper, tag board, or mat board. Dark black lettering makes labels easier to read. Photographs and written materials will also stand out more if they are placed on backgrounds.

Exhibit Design

Although students will be able to explain their exhibits during the initial judging, a successful exhibit must be able to explain itself. This makes it important to design an exhibit so that the photographs, written materials, and illustrations are easy to understand.

It is always tempting to put as much onto the panel boards as possible, but this usually makes for a cluttered and confusing display. Students should try to select only the most important items for their exhibit boards. Clarity and organization are the most important goals for an exhibit.

Exhibit Design Guidelines

Orientation: Make sure the title and subtitle of the exhibit are prominent feature of the design. Make the main idea or thesis clear to the viewer. This is the central point of interest in the exhibit.

Segmentation: Organize the exhibit into subtopics. Use design elements to make subtopics clear to the viewer. The divisions should be logical and identifiable

Explanation: Use clear and concise captions and text to identify visuals and interpret information.

Levels of Text: Attached. Your exhibit should have no handwritten material.

Three-Dimensional Exhibits

A three-dimensional exhibit is more complicated to construct but can be especially effective in explaining themes in which change over time is important. As in the three-panel display, one side should contain the title and main idea. As viewers move around the exhibit the development of the topic can be explored. It is not necessary for the exhibit itself to be able to spin. It may be set on a table (or on the floor) so that people can walk around it.

Bibliography

MLA format is essential and the bibliography should be attached to the back of the poster. In-text references should be cited on the front as appropriate.

Of Note: Each exhibit will be accompanied by a 3-5 page paper explaining the thinking and materials from which the exhibit was drawn. *MLA* formatting is required for this paper.

You will be scheduled a time to **defend the thesis** of your paper and exhibit to an instructor during the conference.