

## *Creating Exhibit Entries*

Exhibits are designed to display visual and written information on topics in an attractive and easily understood 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 and is 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.

### **Labeling**

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 also stand out more if they are placed on backgrounds.

### **Writing Effective Labels**

[Click here to learn how to write effective labels for your exhibit.](#) Kenneth DeRoux, Curator of Museum Services from the Alaska State Museum, condenses the best tips on writing exhibit labels into a two page document. Thought not all tips apply to National History Day, it is very informative.

### **Exhibit Design**

A successful exhibit must be able to explain itself. It is important to design an exhibit so that the photographs, written materials and illustrations are easy to understand.

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

**"HELP! For National History Day Exhibit Projects"** Click on the link below for an exhibit designer's booklet for doing National History Day exhibits produced by the pro's at the Hoover Presidential Library and Museum. Cultivate your inner artist or graphic designer! (After the research and interpretation is completed...).

<http://hoover.archives.gov/education/nhd/index.html>

### **Exhibit Design Guidelines**

Two hand-outs illustrate the importance of design in the creation of a National History Day exhibit. [Orientation, Segmentation and Explanation](#) addresses overall exhibit design and [Levels of Text](#) demonstrates the importance of titles and font size in clear exhibit design. [Click here for step-by-step instructions on how to cut fomecore or gatorboard.](#)

### **Three-Dimensional Exhibits**

A three-dimensional exhibit is more complicated to construct but can be an effective presentation style. 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.

### **Word Limit**

There is a 500-word limit for student-composed written materials on an exhibit. [View examples](#) of how to count words and what constitutes student-composed materials.