

**GUIDELINES FOR  
STATE FAIR PROJECTS**

*(Revised March, 2012)*

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## PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parental involvement in a project is essential. The most important ingredient in the project is the amount of learning the student acquires while developing his/her topic. Many abilities are developed, such as research, organizing, outlining, measuring, reporting, thinking, reading, writing, and social skills.

Parents should keep the following points in mind when assisting students with their project:

- The student is responsible for completing the project. It is inappropriate for the parent to complete the project for the child.
- Parents should support and encourage student involvement in the Social Studies Fair.
- The emphasis should be on student achievement and learning, not on *winning*.

Some forms of parental involvement which are welcomed include:

- Suggesting project ideas.
- Suggesting reference sources.
- Transporting students to libraries, business places, museums, and other locations that are sources of project information.
- Offering constructive criticism.
- Monitoring construction of the project to insure safety.
- Discussing the topic and asking questions about what he/she is learning.
- Giving encouragement.
- Being a good listener when the student wants to practice his/her oral presentation.

## THE BASICS OF A SOCIAL STUDIES FAIR PROJECT

The development of every social studies fair project should consider these things:

- A. A topic
- B. A physical display
- C. A research paper
- D. An oral presentation

### Selecting a topic:

In selecting and identifying a topic for use in a social studies fair project several things should be kept in mind. It is essential that the student topic establish some relationship to man. The topic and project should be distinctly related to the social sciences and history. Beware of the overlap that can occur with a topic. For example, a student might select a topic related to Native Americans. Depending on the topic treatment, the project could apply to any number of disciplines. The project could examine the history of Native Americans (history), how they earned their living (economics), their customs (anthropology), how they lived together (sociology), government policy toward Native Americans (political science) or where they lived (geography). It is important that the student make it very clear that the topic and its treatment are distinctly related to the discipline chosen for the competition.

Students must avoid the use of topics that are clearly related to pure science areas. For example, the study of geology should not be confused with geography and dinosaurs should not be included in a project unless there is a clear relationship to humans.

The best way for a student to select a topic is to identify something about which they are curious; students always have questions about many different topics, subjects, events, people, and places. The student should identify one of these or anything else that may pique their curiosity, then contemplate the subject matter.

In considering a topic, remember:

1. **Value:** The topic should be enlightening on some significant aspect of human experience.
2. **Originality:** If a project has been the subject of a previous investigation, the proposed new study should either furnish substantial new evidence or provide a significant new interpretation.
3. **Practicality:** Sources must be available which one may use conveniently and without fear of censorship. The scope of the subject should be neither too limited nor too broad.
4. **Unity:** Every project must have a unifying theme, or be directed to a certain question or thesis; thus there is a point of departure, the development of subject, and specific conclusions.

There are unlimited topics for study, especially at the local level. These include studies of business, churches, governments, biographies, community changes, and other topics. It must be understood, however, that any one phase may involve one or all of the social studies.

For example, the evolution of business represents one phase of economics; its impact on people involves sociology and its influence on people involves psychology. Even though the project encompasses many disciplines, it must be entered for competition in the discipline of major emphasis.

In selecting a topic, the student should exercise care regarding the scope of the project. The project topic should not be so broad that it cannot be given good in-depth treatment. Conversely, the student's topic should not be too specific. For example, a topic such as World War II may be too broad and too difficult to complete everything about that historical event in one comprehensive project. On the other hand, a topic such as Louisiana in World War II may be too narrow because information on Louisiana's involvement in the war would be too limited. A specific topic would, perhaps, be more suitable; some examples are the War in the Pacific, the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Allied invasion of Europe, the development of the atomic bomb, or the Battle of the Bulge.

It is possible that a student may be able to successfully create a project on World War II or Louisiana in World War II. The key is how the student treats the topic. A student might be able to create a project with a unique perspective on both these topics. However, great care should be given to find the middle ground between topics that are too broad and topics that are too narrow.

Once a reasonable topic is selected, a title should be given to the project. The title should be short and descriptive and create a picture of the project. It should pique the judges' curiosity and spark an interest in learning more about the project associated with the title. It may be that the best title for the project might emerge from the research, and the title could be assigned after the research is completed.

Once the topic and/or the title is selected, the student should begin research. Information can be gathered from many sources, especially school, public, or college/university libraries.

Sources of information concerning one project may require only questionnaires to a sample of people and the tabulation of results. Another project may be based on the study of manuscripts and/or newspapers and still another project may be based on government publications or those of some specialized agency. The following are fruitful sources of information for researchers in the social sciences:

- A. Newspapers, magazines, published letters, memos
- B. Unpublished manuscripts (wills, letters, deeds, church minutes, diaries)
- C. Government publications (international, national, state, local)
- D. Publications by private agencies, physical remains (buildings, battle areas, artifacts)
- E. Oral interviews, polls and questionnaires, photographs, sound recordings, films

As a rule, a good researcher uses a variety of three, and the use of one leads to the use of another.

Students should consult general reference materials first if they have no background information at all or if the topic is not current. Some suggested reference sources of this type are:

- A. Encyclopedias
- B. Atlas and gazetteers

- C. Almanacs
- D. Yearbooks and handbooks
- E. Biographical dictionaries

If the information is very current, information can be found through the use of:

- A. Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature
- B. Vertical files
- C. Newspapers or news magazines
- D. Current biography

One of the most powerful tools for library research, other than the librarian, is the card catalog. This invaluable tool will allow the student to locate information according to the title of a book, subject, or author.

Another excellent, often overlooked, source is community people who can offer oral information about a wide range of topics and events. Students with appropriate topics will find these people a fine source of information which can enrich their projects with unique and often unusual information unavailable from other sources. Other information can be secured from community people in the form of questionnaires or surveys.

Social studies and other teachers with responsibilities for developing skills should not miss the opportunity to provide appropriate instruction in these areas to students working on fair projects: reading, writing, research and reference, study, thinking, and other skills. Instruction should be coordinated with the development of social studies projects.

## PROJECT DISPLAY

The display is the physical representation of your theme or topic. It must fit within a space 36 inches wide and 30 inches deep. It cannot weigh over 100 pounds or be taller than 100 inches. The project may assume one of several forms:

- A. **Visual projects:** This type project relies primarily on visual elements to convey to the judges the meaning of the project.
- B. **Audio projects:** This type project relies primarily on audio elements to convey to the judges the meaning of the project.
- C. **Audio-visual projects:** This type project relies on both audio and visual elements to convey to the judges the meaning of the project.

In all the forms, the student must still have a research paper and should be prepared to give an oral presentation to the judges.

Other points to remember about the physical appearance of the project are:

- A. The title of the project must be on the display.
- B. Use one color printing to avoid confusion.
- C. The materials used for the project vary, but it should be safe, strong, lightweight, and self-supporting.
- D. Use attractive materials and lettering.
- E. Words should be seen easily from a distance of three to five feet.
- F. Choose colors which have good value contrast. Value contrast is the amount of darkness or lightness in a color. For example, navy blue letters on a yellow background are easier to read than orange letters on a yellow background.

Suggested colors are:

- |                    |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. White on black  | 5. Orange on purple    |
| 2. Black on yellow | 6. White on purple     |
| 3. Black on orange | 7. Navy blue on yellow |
| 4. Yellow on green | 8. Purple on yellow    |

- G. The student should be imaginative when working on the physical display. For instance, constructing figurines of people from clay, clothespins, cardboard, toothpicks, or pipe cleaners is better than buying plastic figurines from a toy store. Original drawings are better than photocopied facsimiles. Creative ability is one of the components involved in judging.

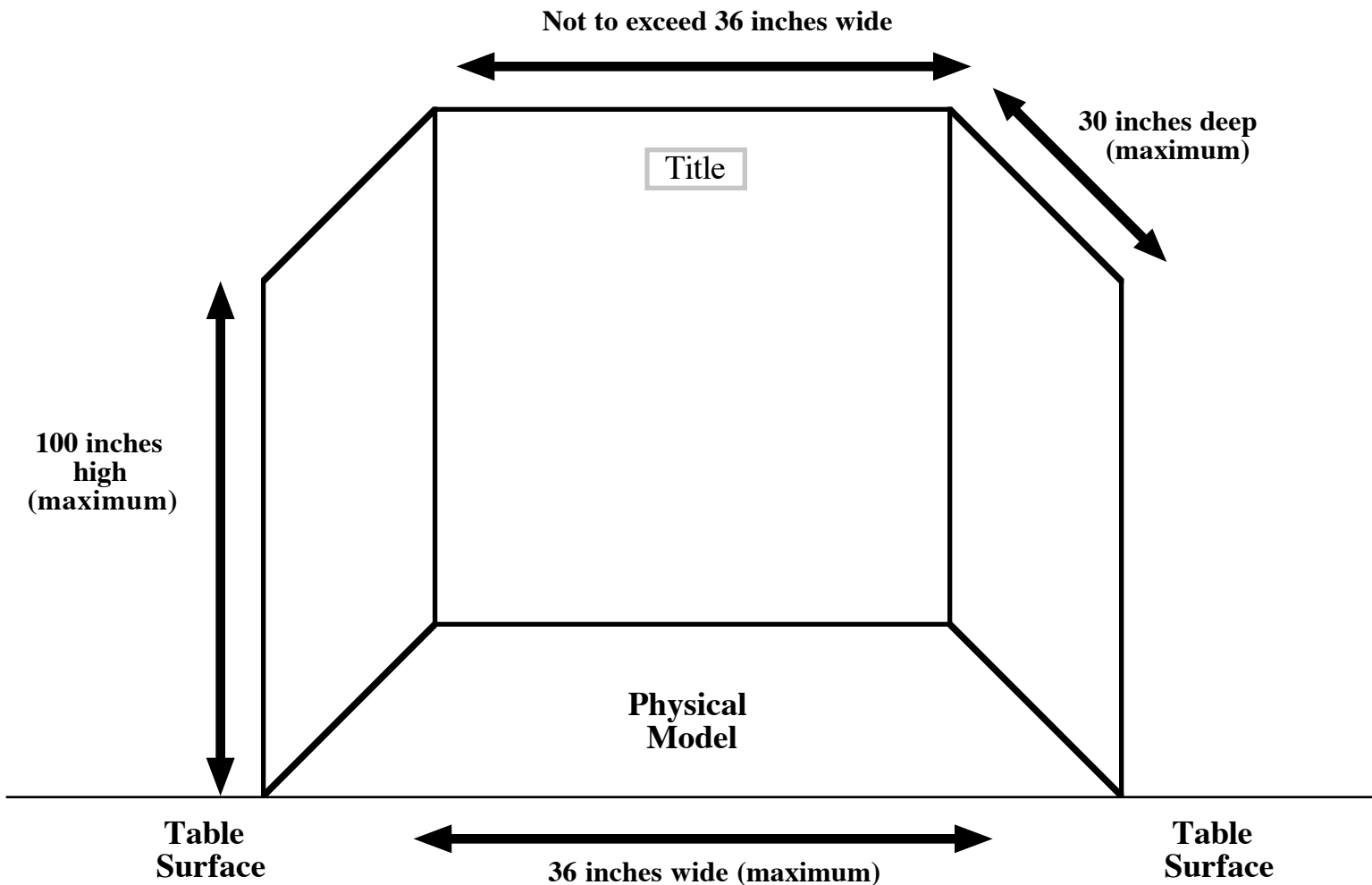
H. Do not use flammable, toxic, or other dangerous materials or objects.

Various project media can be included in the project. These include:

- |    |                      |    |                 |
|----|----------------------|----|-----------------|
| A. | Charts               | F. | Diagrams        |
| B. | Documentaries        | G. | Photographs     |
| C. | Murals               | H. | Graphs          |
| D. | Maps                 | I. | Mock-up surveys |
| E. | Statistical analysis |    |                 |



## SIZE AND WEIGHT REQUIREMENTS FOR PROJECTS



**No part of the project is to be below the table surface**

**Note:** Maximum weight is 100 pounds

**Note:** The title may be placed anywhere on the project. The research paper is not to be attached to the backboard. No part of the project may extend beyond the above listed measurements.

**Note:** No project may extend below the level of the table top. This includes any audio/visual equipment.

# RESEARCH PAPER

A well developed research paper must accompany each social studies fair project. The research paper must include these items:

1. **Title Page**

Good titles usually are short, descriptive, and create pictures in the minds of the audience. A title should hint at the subject without telling the whole story like a riddle that sparks interest because it makes the listener think.

2. **Table of Contents**

All major elements in the paper should be listed with the appropriate page number.

3. **Abstract**

It is a brief (approximately 250 words) summary of the content, purpose, and reference sources used in the paper. The purpose of the report should be based on the questions you asked or the problem you identified. The following is an example of an abstract.

This project is about the internment of Japanese-American citizens during World War II. The project will describe the historical background for popular sentiment against Japanese-Americans living on the west coast of the United States at the beginning of World War II. The project will show that the internment of these people was not an act to increase national security, but was part of a greater effort to calm an alarmed American public frightened by the sudden attack on Pearl Harbor. Further, the project will show that the internment of these Americans citizens was inconsistent with constitutional principles.

Information for this project was secured from various sources, including books, periodicals, and government documents. Also included with the project will be taped interviews with legal experts and Japanese-Americans.

This project intends to demonstrate that even in times of national emergency, citizens must be careful to ensure constitutional rights.

4. **Body of Paper**

This element should be the longest section of the report. The length of the paper may vary, depending on the type of project, but it should be at least five (5) pages in length to adequately cover the topics.

The body contains the important facts that the student has gathered from books, encyclopedias, magazines, and other references. Plagiarism, or copying *word-for-word* from a reference book, is not allowed.

The student should be able to read and understand all information contained in the report. The body should contain the material that the student learned during the course of the project.

## 5. **Conclusion**

The student should briefly describe the knowledge he/she has gained as a result of completing the project. The conclusion may consist of simply one or two paragraphs describing the general ideas that the student learned. The conclusion should be written on a separate sheet of paper and not written as the last paragraph or two of the body.

## 6. **Footnotes**

Footnotes are required for high school papers. Any standard research form for citations is acceptable including parenthetical citations. All information (including oral information) must be properly cited.

## 7. **Bibliography**

This element is a list of the books and other references from which the student gained information for his/her project. Any standard bibliographic or reference style may be used. All entries should be listed in alphabetical order. A sample bibliography showing various types of references is given in the box below. Students should have a variety of sources and should not be mainly internet citations.

### **Book:**

Adams, Mary. Women's Liberation and Equal Rights. Chicago: Prentice-Hall, 1973.

### **Encyclopedia:**

Smith, Jane. "United States History." World Book Encyclopedia. Chicago: World Book-Childcraft International, Inc., 1985, Vol. 22, pp. 813-831.

### **Magazine:**

Wilson, Robert. "Conflict in South Africa." Time. January 1977, p. 57.

### **Newspaper:**

"Election Results." New Orleans States-Item. November 6, 1976.

### **Pamphlet:**

The American Flag. United States marine Corps, 1977.

### **Television Program:**

Issues and Answers. NEC. February 10, 1976.

### **Interview:**

Smith, Jan. Social Studies Teacher, Grace King High School, December 1991.

# ELEMENTS IN A RESEARCH PAPER FOR A SOCIAL STUDIES FAIR PROJECT

(Label each page with the specific component)

\*1. Title

\*2. Table of Contents 3. Abstract

\*4. Body of Paper

5. Body of Paper  
(length may vary but must be at least one page)

\*6. Body of Paper

\*7. Conclusion

\*8. Footnotes/Endnotes

\*9. Bibliography

\* Label each element on one page

## TIME LINE

The following time line may help the student complete his/her project. This suggested time line spans a 12-week period. The time line may vary depending upon teacher discretion.

- Step 1: Topic selection (1 week)
- Step 2: Research (4 weeks)
- Step 3: Outline (1 week)
- Step 4: Rough draft of all elements of the written report (1 week)
- Step 5: Final copy of the written report (1 week)
- Step 6: Diagram of physical model and gathering of materials (1 week)
- Step 7: Construction of physical model (2 weeks)
- Step 8: Preparation for the oral presentation (1 week)

## ORAL PRESENTATION

Oral presentations are required for both the Regional and State fairs. Each project must have one (1) student give an oral presentation to judges on their project. The student should also be prepared to respond to any questions that might be asked about the project. The oral presentation should be concise, direct, and in logical order; responses to questions should also be concise and direct. These are some things that will be beneficial in the oral presentation when responding to questions:

- A. Keep eye contact with judges.
- B. Stand on both feet.
- C. Dress neatly.
- D. Stay within the time limit.
- E. Integrate the display into the presentation.
- F. Use conversational speech.
- G. Relax, speak slowly and clearly.

There are several things that should be avoided during the oral presentation. These include:

- A. Chewing gum or tobacco.
- B. Moving nervously.
- C. Standing in front of or obscuring the project
- D. Using note cards or notes.
- E. Putting hands in pockets.
- F. Wearing heavy jewelry or distracting clothing.

Students will be given four (4) minutes for their presentation. Two (2) minutes for their speech and two (2) minutes for judges' questions. At the regional and state level, only one student can be on the floor to defend the project - that applies to group projects as well as individual projects.

## **TYPE OF PROJECT**

All projects should be inquiry based in nature. A problem-solving project involves a higher level of thinking skills and generally draws a conclusion. The topic is treated as a problem, and the student attempts to achieve a solution. An example of a problem-solving project is “Should the United Nations be Abolished?”

## **INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP PROJECTS**

A project may be performed by an individual student or by a group of students. A group size may range from two students to an entire class. In a group project, equal credit is given to each member, so the workload should be shared equally.

## STATE FAIR PROJECT CHECK-OFF LIST

Before going to the state fair, check off each of the following to make sure you are in compliance with state regulations.

- 1. Research paper is not attached to the backboard.
- 2. Title page is included (not labeled as such)
- 3. Table of Contents is included (labeled at the top of the page, separate page)
- 4. Abstract is included (labeled at the top of the page, separate page)
- 5. Body of Research is included (pages are not labeled)
- 6. Conclusion is include (labeled at the top of the page, separate page)
- 7. Footnotes/Endnotes is included (labeled at the top of the page) (required for Division III projects, optional for Division I and Division II)
- 8. Bibliography is included (labeled at the top of the page, separate page)
- 9. The research paper is typed (required for Division III, optional for Division I and Division II)
- 10. Minimum 100 ft. extension cord if needed for project.
- 11. This project, as is, has not, nor will be entered into any other type of fair (i.e. Science, Home Economic, Industrial Arts) other than a social studies fair.
- 12. Oral presentation has been prepared for defendng the project (3 minutes). Two minutes additional for judges' questions.
- 13. This project conforms to the maximum space allotment of 36" wide, 30" deep, 8' high, and not over 100 lbs. (These figures are maximums, project may be smaller)
- 14. The entrant's name, school, hometown, or other identifying information is not visible anywhere on the project or research paper.
- 15. No live animals, embryos, fetuses, or original archaeological items are exhibited on the project.

- 16. Only one student is permitted to defend and be present on the floor for judging of group projects.
- 17. If my project deals with archeology, I am aware of state regulations governing this topic.