

Introducing...



NATIONAL HISTORY DAY!

**Almost everything you need to know
to get started on your History Day adventure.**

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National History Day in Ohio
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Adapted from "Introducing National History Day" from National History Day in Minnesota

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Table of Contents

The information in this guide is divided into two parts:

1.) Research (Noun. Scholarly investigation or inquiry)

Research is the most important part of creating a History Day entry. Historians depend on research the same way detectives need clues. This is because ideas need evidence in order to convince people of their importance. Unlike detectives, however, History Day participants get to choose the “case” they will work on when they select their topics. The Research section of this guide will address these steps:

Topic Selection:

- Selecting a Topic**
- Narrowing your Topic**

Finding and Organizing Information:

- Research Strategy**
- Sample Note Cards**
- Research Sources**
 - Secondary Sources
 - Primary Sources
- Finding Sources**

The Process Paper

2.) Presentation (Noun. A creative demonstration of ideas and information)

Once you have completed your research you need to design an effective entry for your category. Each category is described in this guide along with some basic suggestions and design approaches. These ideas will help you get started, but do not feel limited by them. Use your creativity and imagination to make your presentation stand out!

- Choosing a category**
- Exhibits**
- Performances**
- Documentaries**

Part One: RESEARCH

Topic Selection

Selecting a Topic

The key to an effective History Day entry is the combination of a good topic with good sources. Here are some questions to think about when you select a topic to research:

- Does it fit the theme for the year?
- Does the topic interest you? (Remember, you will spend a lot of time researching this topic.)
- Can you find sources to document the topic?
- Why is this topic important in history? (What will people learn from your presentation?)

Narrowing your Topic

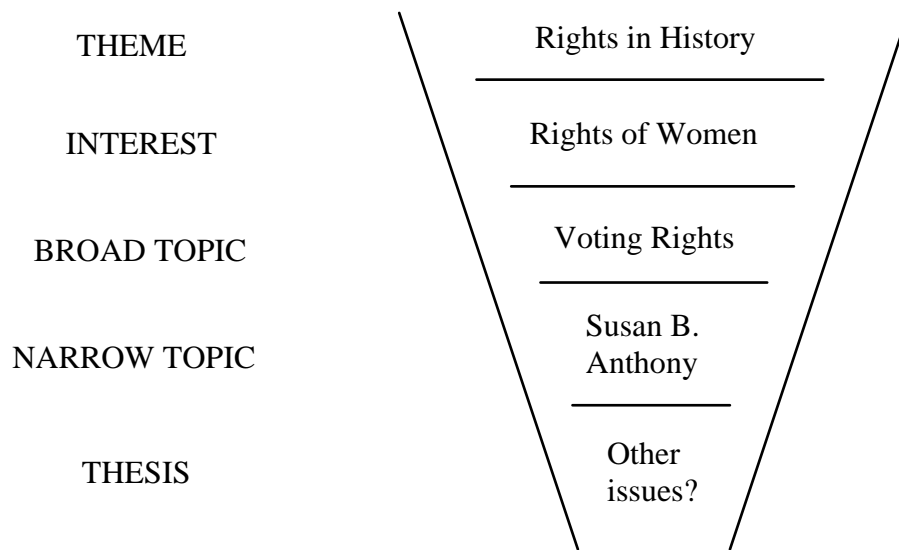
A good way to choose a topic is to start with a general area of history you find interesting. This might be information you read about in your textbook or something related to family history. Once you define your interest, the next step is to narrow your general ideas into a more focused topic.

Here is an example for the theme “Rights and Responsibilities.” Your group is interested in women’s history, but realizes that this topic needs to be narrowed down. Because it is an election year you decide to research “Women’s Voting Rights.” However, this topic is still too broad because you have not defined the time and place for your study.

At this point one of your group members remembered that the silver dollar she saw in her aunt’s coin collection had a picture of Susan B. Anthony. By making Susan B. Anthony part of your topic you can focus on the rise of the women’s suffrage (voting rights) movement in the United States during the 1800s.

As you work on this topic you may come up with other points for analysis such as comparing the efforts of American women to the suffrage movement in England, or how Susan B. Anthony inspired local women to organize to gain voting rights in their states and communities.

This chart summarizes the topic selection process:



Finding and Organizing Information

Research Strategy

As you start to gather information it is important to have a **research strategy**. A good research strategy has two parts:

1. Finding sources of information

Textbooks, encyclopedias, and other books you can find in your school library are a great place to start. Other sources of information could include: city and college libraries, historical societies, national or local archives, interviews, and the Internet.

2. Keeping track of notes and sources

Information is only valuable if you can record it and use it later. One of the best ways to organize your research is to use note cards. Use one set of cards to record **notes and quotes** that you find in your sources. Use another set of cards to record the information about your sources that you will need for your **annotated bibliography**.

You can buy index cards at office supply stores or discount stores. Look for the larger sized cards (5 inches x 8 inches) that have lines for writing. You can buy more than one color to help keep your cards organized.

Sample Note Cards

Here are examples of index cards for a bibliographic entry and research notes about the Ohio National Guard's participation in the Civil War.

Bibliography Card

Bibliography	Secondary Source	Magazine
Leeke, Jim. "Hundred Days Men." <u>Timeline</u> July-August 2000. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio Historical Society. Pages 24-39.		
This article explained the experiences of the fighting men of the state of Ohio during the Civil War. It covered their life in camp, battle, and Southern prison. Pictures of the men, maps of battlegrounds, newspaper articles, and even a songbook were all included in the article.		
Important pages: 26-29, 36-39		

Once you have copied down the important information about your source, you can begin to take notes. Get a new card and write a brief description of the information on the top. Write the source and page number for these notes in the upper right hand corner. In order to avoid **plagiarism**, make sure you note when you have copied down the author's words exactly. In most of your notes you will **paraphrase** the author's text. This means you will write down a short summary of the author's ideas in your own words.

Note Card

The 149 th Ohio on defending Washington D. C. and after	Leeke, page 36
Following Monocacy, the 149 th was involved in the pursuit of Lieutenant General Jubal Early's retreat from his attempted raid on Washington D. C. The Rebels were forced back and kept out of the capital, and then the 149 th joined the pursuit of the retreating army.	
The importance of this battle brought out the worried government officials and high ranked military men. Corporal Elihu C. Barnard remembered seeing Abraham Lincoln step out of a closed carriage and "stand at one point of the [defensive] works on the afternoon of the battle. Mr. Lincoln wore a long linen duster."	
The 149 th joined the chase into the Shenandoah Valley, along with the 144 th Ohio, yet were ambushed by Colonel John S. Mosby's partisan rangers. Many men were captured and spent grueling years in Southern prisons, succumbing to hunger and disease.	

Research Sources

Historians try to find a variety of sources to help them shape an accurate understanding of the past. History Day participants are asked to separate their bibliographies into **primary** and **secondary** sources. The following descriptions should help you decide how to classify your sources.

Primary Sources

Primary sources have a direct relationship to your topic because they:

- were written or produced in the time period you are studying.
- are eyewitness accounts of historic events.
- are documents related to specific historic events.
- are later recollections by participants in historic events.

Examples of primary sources include:

Diaries	Manuscript collections
Autobiographies	Newspapers from the era
Government records	Letters
Photographs	Music of the era
Interviews with participants	Historic Objects

Secondary Sources

Secondary sources are usually published books or articles by an author who makes a personal interpretation about a topic based on primary sources. **The writer is not an eyewitness to, or a participant in, the historic event.** Most library books are secondary sources, as are encyclopedias. Secondary sources are useful because they provide important background information about your topic. The footnotes and bibliographies of secondary sources will also lead you to primary sources.

Another thing to remember is that the “facts” of history can be interpreted many ways. Many secondary sources will present different ideas about the same topic. Just because someone has written a book does not mean that his or her interpretation is the only correct view. Use your research to draw your own conclusions.

Examples of secondary sources:

Biographies	Books about the topic
Encyclopedias	Articles about the topic
History textbooks	Media documentaries
Interviews with scholars	

Finding Sources

The best place to begin your search for sources on your topic is in your school or local library. An encyclopedia is a good place to find basic information about your topic and encyclopedia entries usually list books for further reading. It is important to find other sources of information and not depend on encyclopedias. One of the best resources for finding information on your topic is a **Librarian or Media Specialist**. Librarians and media specialists are professional information gatherers and are very helpful in suggesting ways to go about your research.

You will also discover that the first few books you find will also help you in your search. Books containing footnotes or a bibliography can provide you with listings of many other sources, both primary and secondary, relating to your topic. Be sure to write these listings down in a notebook so that you can try to find them later.

Once you have collected the basic information and sources on your topic, you may want to try to locate some unique sources. At this stage in your research you will be looking for primary sources. Here are some places to go:

Municipal and College Libraries

Municipal and college libraries have many more resources than school libraries. These libraries are especially helpful because they have primary sources (such as old newspapers) on microfilm that you can use there or make copies to take with you. If you cannot check out books be sure to bring money for copying!

Historical Societies

If your topic is on Ohio history, a historical society may be helpful. The state and local historical societies specialize in collecting information about Ohio and local communities. Letters, diaries, photographs, and documents are but a few of the many materials available for your research. There may be special rules on how you may use these materials. It is best to telephone first to learn if the society's collections include information about your topic and to learn what the rules of the collections are.

Interviews

If your topic includes persons who are still alive and can provide informed opinions, you may want to conduct interviews with them. Contact your subject to set up a time and place to meet. Write your questions in advance and be prepared to take notes or record the interview. If you cannot meet with your subject you can send them a few questions to answer. Remember, they can't say yes if you don't ask!

The Process Paper

History Day entries in the exhibit, documentary, and performance categories* must also include a process paper. This paper introduces your topic, explains how you developed your entry, and documents your research. It is important to do a good job on this part of your entry because it is the first thing that people look at when they evaluate your work. The process paper contains three parts: the title page, a research description, and the annotated bibliography.

*The research paper category requires a title page and annotated bibliography, but does not include a research description. See the *National History Day Contest Rule Book* (available on-line at www.nhd.org or www.ohiohistory.org/historyday) for complete details.

Title Page

The title page includes the title of your entry, name(s) of the student(s) who developed the entry, and the division and category of the entry. It is important to come up with a good title for your entry. A good title will quickly introduce your topic, but it also important to add wording that helps the viewer understand your point of view.

For example, a title for an entry about the Ohio National Guard in the Civil War could be:

**“Bully for the Buckeyes”:
The Ohio National Guard in the Civil War**

This title explains the topic and uses a quote shouted by a well wisher when the Ohio National Guard rode by in a train.

Research Description

The research description is **not** a summary of your topic, but an essay that describes the process of how the entry was developed. Use your 500 words to explain how you selected your topic, conducted your research, and developed your entry. You should conclude with a description of how your topic fits this year’s National History Day theme.

Annotated Bibliography

A **bibliography** is an alphabetized list of the sources you used. An **annotated bibliography** not only lists the sources, but also gives a short description of the source and how you used it in your entry. A History Day bibliography should be separated in to **primary** and **secondary sources**. For guidelines on bibliographic style you should refer to *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* by Kate L. Turabian, or the style guide of the Modern Language Association of America (MLA).

Part Two: PRESENTATION

The second part of this guide offers suggestions on how to present your research in one of the following History Day categories:

EXHIBIT

PERFORMANCE

DOCUMENTARY

Remember, the paper category is only open to individual entries. Exhibits, performances, and documentaries may be created as individual or group entries. The suggestions presented here are not complete. These ideas are only a starting point and you are encouraged to create your own strategies for developing contest entries.

Choosing a Category

When selecting a category it is important to consider the following:

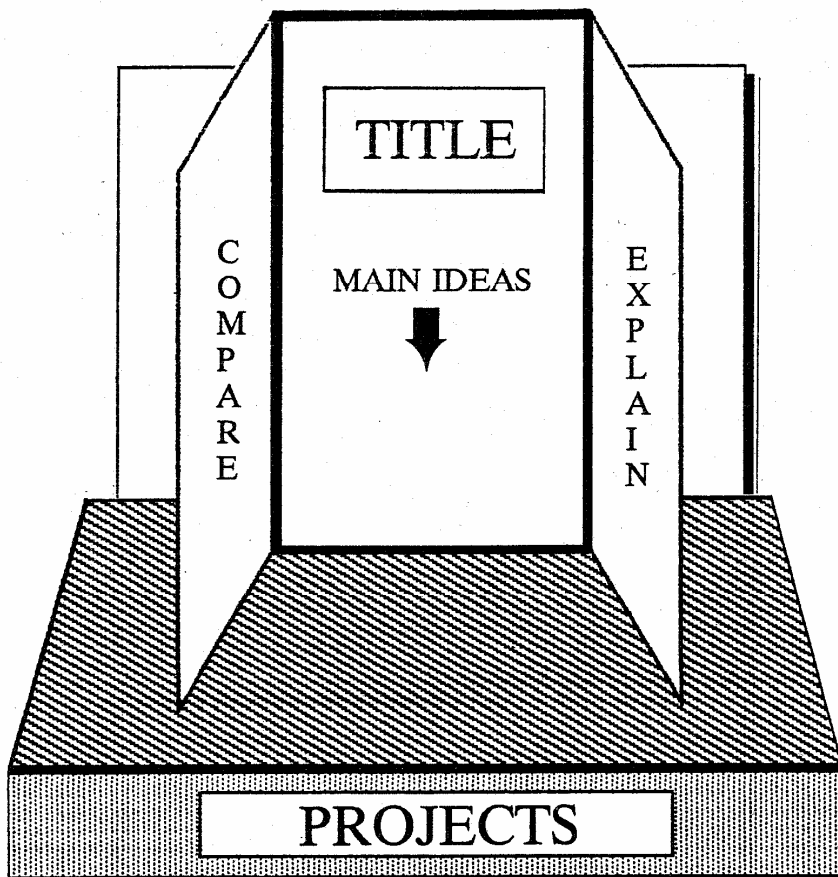
- Which category best fits your interests and skills (or the talents of group members)?
- Will you have access to the equipment or materials you need to present your entry? (This is especially important for documentaries!)
- Does your research fit one category better than another? (For example, do you have enough pictures for an exhibit?)

Once you have selected a category try to look at examples created by other students. This may help give you ideas about the best way to present your topic. Your own creativity, in combination with good research, will make your presentation stand out.

The National History Day *Contest Rule Book*

After choosing your category be sure to consult the National History Day *Contest Rule Book* for complete information on the rules that relate to your entry. The *Contest Rule Book* will also describe the judging criteria for evaluating History Day entries. The *Contest Rule Book* is available online at www.nhd.org or www.ohiohistory.org/historyday.

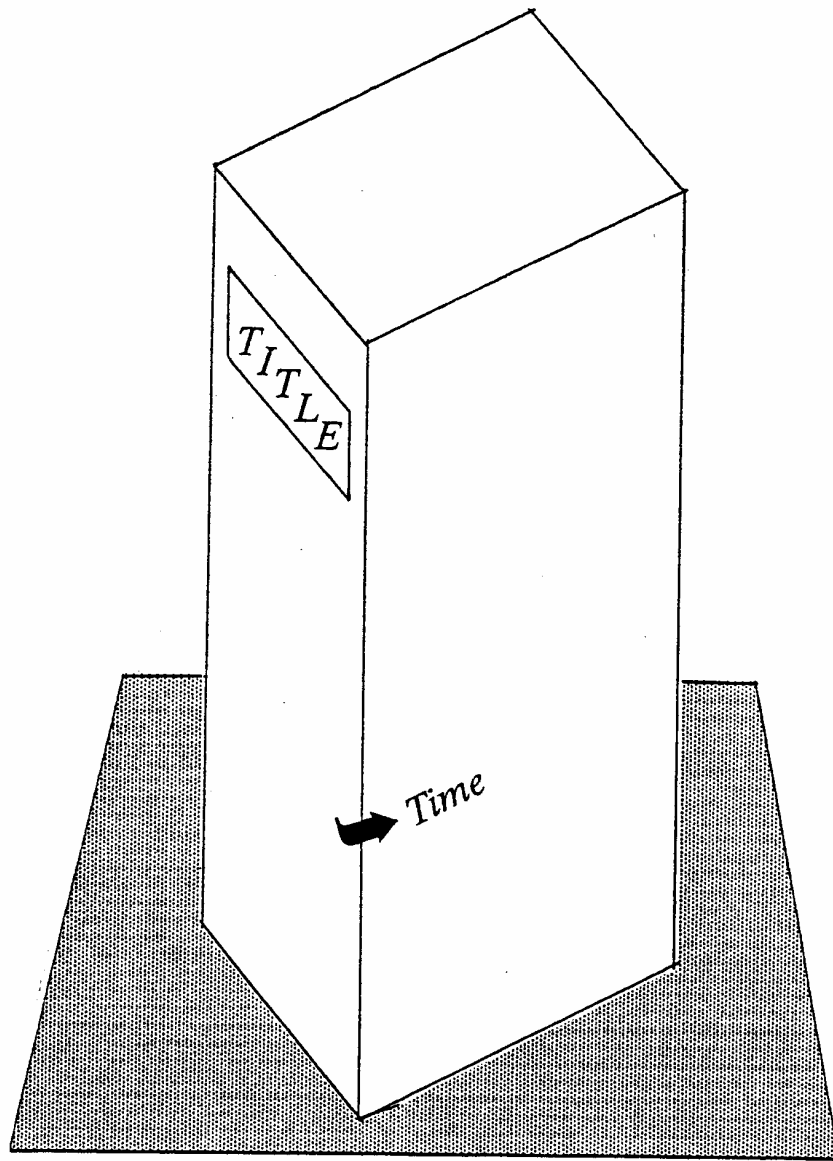
EXHIBITS



Exhibits are designed to display visual and written information on a topic in an easy to understand and attractive manner. They are similar to exhibits in a museum. 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 similar to the above illustration. This style is the least complicated to design and build, but is still a very effective way to present you information. Here are some tips for this style:

- * Be sure your title is the main focus of the center panel.
- * Also use the center panel to present you main ideas.
- * The side panels are best used either to compare issues about your topic or explain related details.
- * Artifacts or other materials may also be placed on the table between the side panels.



THREE DIMENSIONAL EXHIBIT

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

MORE HINTS ABOUT EXHIBITS...



LABELING

The labels you use for your title and main ideas are very important because they direct the viewer's eye around your project.

One way to make your 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 your labels easier to read.

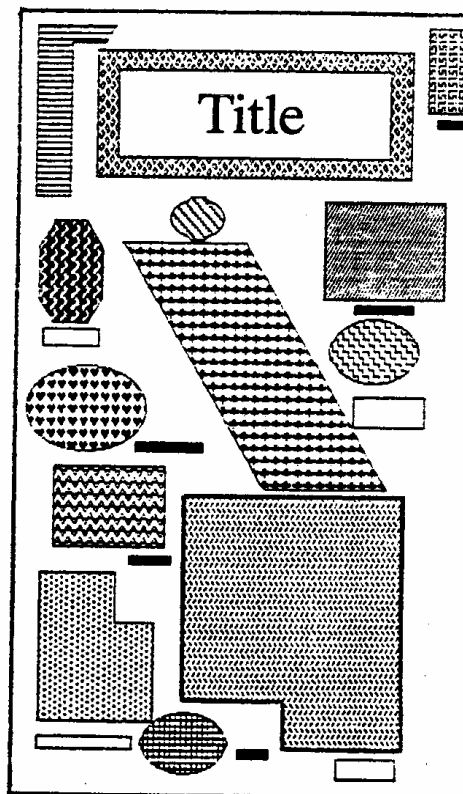
Photographs and written materials will also stand out more for the viewer if you put them on backgrounds as well.

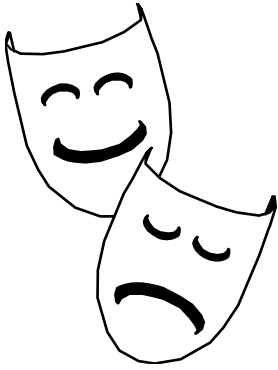
EXHIBIT DESIGN

Although you will be able to explain your exhibit during the initial judging, a successful exhibit entry must also be able to explain itself. It is important that you design your exhibit in a way that your photographs, written materials, and illustrations are easy to understand and to follow.

It is always tempting to try to get as much on to your panel boards as possible, but this usually makes for a cluttered and confusing display. Try to select only the most important items for your boards. Clarity and organization are the most important goals for an exhibit.

Be Careful of Clutter!





PERFORMANCES

The Performance category allows you to create a historical play. Entries in this category must have dramatic appeal, but not at the expense of historical information. Creativity is the key here, and students must make effective use of their 10 minute time allowance. Innovative performances have made this category the highlight of many History Day competitions!

Here are some suggestions:

- Do good research first, don't jump right in and start writing a script. Take time to brainstorm about general ideas and the ways they might be presented.
- When you do write your script, make sure it contains references to the historical evidence, particularly the primary source material you found in your research. Using actual dialogue, quotations, or taking excerpts from speeches are good ways of putting historical detail into your performance.
- Be careful of presenting an oral report on a character which begins with when they were born and ends with when they died. Become the historical figure and write your script around an important time or place which will explain your ideas.
- Don't get carried away with props! Content is the most important factor and any props you use should be directly related to your topic. Props should help you to emphasize the key concepts of your performance. Remember, you only have five minutes to put up and take down your props.
- Good costumes help make you convincing, but be sure they are appropriate to your topic. Consult photographs or costume guides if you are unsure about appropriate dress.
- See examples of historical plays to gather insights into stage movements, use of props, etc.

-
- Practice! Practice! Practice!

DOCUMENTARIES



POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS

The documentary entry allows you to create documentaries like the ones on PBS or the History Channel. Although the use of videotape or DVD is popular in this category, PowerPoint or slide presentations are still an effective medium. Slides can be either purchased or produced by students. The key to an effective entry is a good combination of visual images and recorded narrative.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Make a story board of the types of images you want to use to explain your topic (*see blank story board attached*).
- Photograph pictures from books to build your slide collection and avoid too much repetition.
- Appropriate music is an important addition to your recorded narrative.
- Make sure your narrative fits with the image on the screen.
- Preview early and edit at least once.

VIDEO PRESENTATIONS

The availability of home video cameras has increased the popularity of this entry category. If you are able to use editing equipment in your school or local cable company this can be an exciting and educational project. Here are some suggestions for video entries:

- Remember -- a student must operate the camera and the editing equipment.
- Be sure to draw up a story board of the scenes you will be shooting. This will keep you organized.
- Try to present a variety of panning shots, interviews, live action, and still subjects.
- Keep track of your scenes in a notebook to make editing easier.
- Appropriate instrumental music is an effective addition to your sound track; but remember that the music must match your presentation -- do not let it overshadow the verbal presentation.
- Middle School students can check to use their High School's equipment.
- Local cable companies have film-editing classes.
- Watch professional documentaries for ideas.
- Preview early to make sure that your tape works correctly.
- First record the audio track, then match up the visual images to the sound.