



4-H Educational Displays

Educational displays are an important aspect of the 4-H Communications project as they are an excellent way to communicate a message. Any 4-H member in any project area can make an educational display to enter at their county fair contest. In addition, a club may work together to create a display. Top entries at a county contest may qualify for State Fair competition.

A display is a visual presentation of information. It should concentrate on one central idea or concept. Displays are exhibited on their own without the 4-H member present. Therefore, the design of the display is critical. A good display will catch the viewer's attention, arouse interest, stimulate thought, and motivate the viewer to learn more about the subject.

Subject

You can choose to create an educational display on almost any subject. You do not have to choose something in your specific project area. Displays need to be in good taste and should not advocate any political or religious view.

Select a subject area that interests you. This will make creating your display more pleasurable and rewarding, and you will be more likely to spend the time necessary to do a thorough, quality job.

Be sure you choose a subject that is narrow enough that the viewer can learn about it quickly. The display needs to be able to convey its message in a relatively short amount of time.

Display Type and Dimension Specifics

The display may be either a poster that will hang on a wall or two to three folding panels that sit on a table.

Individual exhibits are limited in size to 30 inches wide, 24 inches deep, and 36 inches high. Club exhibits are limited in size to 60 inches wide, 24 inches deep, and 36 inches high.

Background Material

There are several materials to choose from to make the background for your display. The background needs to be able to support the material you put on it, and it needs to be able to last through the entire display period. When choosing which material you will use, keep these factors in mind:

- Ease of use
- Cost
- Is it reusable?
- Color choices
- Size
- Weight
- Sturdiness

Let's look at a few common background materials and their pro's and con's.

Posterboard

Pros

Inexpensive
Lightweight, easy to transport
Available in many colors
Easy to cut

Cons

Corners bend easily
Often needs protection or support
Can't stand on its own; must be hung
Stains easily with water drops

Corrugated board

Pros

Inexpensive
Lightweight, easy to transport
Easily cut and/or painted
Can stand on its own (if panels)

Cons

Can be bent or damaged
Limited colors

Foam core

Pros

Lightweight yet rigid
Can be cut or painted
Can cover and reuse

Cons

More expensive
Limited colors
Not repairable if punctured
Hard to cut; edges rough

Matboard

Pros

Available in many colors
Textured surface (different on each side)
Sturdy
Looks very professional

Cons

Most expensive
Harder to cut, but can cut in shapes
Easier to move photos without leaving marks

Plywood

Pros

Very sturdy
Good if have heavy objects to attach
Reusable

Cons

Heavy, harder to transport
Usually needs to be covered
Harder to attach photos, paper to
Expensive
Need tools to cut and hardware
to join pieces

Content

Once you've selected your subject, you need to decide what you will include in your display. Every display will have a title, some text, visuals, and your sources.

Title

Each display needs a title that can be easily read. A good title will meet these requirements:

- It tells what the display is about.
- It is short and simple.
- It catches the viewer's attention.
- It encourages the viewer to read more.

Text

Determine what message you want to get across to the viewers. What do you want them to learn? Your display must contain all the information necessary for your audience to understand the topic. Try to divide your subject into subheadings that can be placed on different parts of the display. Keep text simple and short. The viewer doesn't want to read pages of pure writing.

If you are using books or websites for references, read the information and then put it into your own words. Don't just print text from a website and then place it on your display. Use quotation marks if you are quoting directly from a source.

When you choose a font or letter style, legibility is the key. Avoid fancy or decorative letters except to highlight one or two words. Be consistent with the style you use; too many fonts are confusing.

If you use stencils, be sure you connect all the letter parts. Unconnected letters can be hard to read. You should also avoid using all capital letters. Curved letters should fall slightly below the base line.

The size of the lettering can be much smaller than that used on presentation posters because people will be standing much closer to read. If you make all text legible from a

distance of about 5 feet, you should be fine. Allow enough space between lines of text that it can be read easily but not so much that the connection is lost.

Divide text into logical sections. When possible, use headers for the various parts. Facts are often easier to read and remember if you place each one on a separate line. Bullets are often an effective way to present material quickly.

Visuals

Visuals help make your display more attractive and interesting. Photographs, drawings, clip art, and cartoons are common visuals, but you can also use objects that attach to the display or sit in front of it. It's better to use a few large visuals than many small ones.

For safety reasons, the following materials are not allowed:

- Living organisms (plants or animals) or dead parts of animals or plants
- Any liquids
- Aerosol bottles or other pressurized gases
- Glass
- Hazardous substances
- Sharp items (such as knives or scissors)

Visuals that attach to the background should be firmly attached. Tape, glue, and rubber cement work well for flat items such as photographs. Make sure all corners are secured. Light items (such as fabric) can be attached with a hot glue gun or strong craft glue. Try attaching heavy items such as horseshoes with string, fishing line or wire. Remember, the background must be able to support what you put on it, and what you use to attach items should not distract from the display.

If you are setting visuals in front of your display, make sure it is clear what they are. Loose materials like sand, dirt, or seeds must be in closed containers.

When selecting your visuals, do not use any copyrighted material (cartoons, graphics, etc.) unless you have written permission from the author or artist. 4-H is not able to display such items. The letter "c" with a circle around it designates material that is copyrighted.

Sources

You must list your sources of the front of your display. People who view the display may want to learn more by going to those books, websites, etc.

Design/Arrangement

Before attaching anything to your display, experiment with the layout. The goal is to have your display be visually appealing so that it encourages viewers to stop and read. Simple is good! When planning your display, keep in mind the following elements of design.

Flow/Focus

The design of your display should lead the viewer's eye to one central area of interest. This is usually the center panel of a three-panel display. Arrange the parts of the display so that the message flows in a logical order. The viewer will generally read from top to the bottom and from left to the right.

Space

A well-designed display has plenty of open space. It should not appear cluttered. Leave free approximately two inches on all edges. Arrange sections of text with space between them, and leave space between visuals.

Borders

Adding a border to your display can give it a professional, finished look. Borders can also be used to "box in" important sections that you want the audience to see first.

Unity and Balance

Unity and balance are key elements of an appealing display. Unity means all of the parts look like they belong together. Balance means that elements are evenly distributed across the entire display. There are many techniques you can use to create a unified and balanced display. Use the same header style on different sections of text and the same letter style or font. Keep sections the same approximate size. Having one section of text be three lines long and another a full page doesn't look balanced. Alternate text and visuals. Use a color scheme to tie everything together.

Matting

You can make your display look more professional if you matt the various elements. Again, don't use too many colors. Try matting text with one color and visuals with another color, or use two different shades of a color.

Color

The use of color is another important design element. Color can emphasize important points. It adds interest and helps attract the viewer. It can even create a mood or elicit an emotional response. To use color effectively, keep these suggestions in mind:

- Usually use no more than two or three colors on one display. One color should be dominant.
- Neutral or soft colors are best for backgrounds.
- Solid colors work best for backgrounds. Prints and patterns are often too busy.
- Bright or intense colors are best for small areas or to highlight a point.
- “Warm” colors (red, orange, yellow) appear larger and seem to move forward or stand out. They also stimulate action.
- “Cool” colors (blue, green, violet) appear smaller and seem to move back. They suggest calm and relaxation.
- Some color combinations are easily read; others are extremely difficult. Experiment to see what works.
- If possible, choose colors that follow the theme of the display topic.

Use one of the following types of color schemes to give your display a unified look.

- Monochromatic: Use one color only. This one color can vary in intensity and value (lightness or darkness).
- Analogous: Use colors that are next to each other on the color wheel.
- Complementary: Use colors that are directly opposite each other on the color wheel.



Color Combinations for Visibility

1. Black on yellow
2. Black on orange
3. Yellow-orange on navy blue
4. Green on white
5. Scarlet-red on white
6. Black on white
7. Navy blue on white
8. White on navy blue
9. Yellow-orange on black
10. White on black
11. White on green
12. White on scarlet-red
13. White on purple
14. Purple on white
15. Navy blue on yellow
16. Navy blue on orange
17. Yellow on black
18. Scarlet-red on yellow
19. Yellow on navy blue
20. Purple on yellow
21. Purple on orange
22. White on emerald green
23. Green on yellow
24. Scarlet-red on orange
25. Emerald green on white
26. Yellow on purple
27. Orange on purple
28. Green on orange
29. Green on yellow
30. Orange on yellow

Creativity

Creativity is a plus. Let your imagination go, and don't be afraid to experiment! Following are just a few ideas:

- Instead of just using a rectangular posterboard, cut it into a shape to match your topic.
- Place text on matting cut into shapes.
- Make your display three dimensional by adding texture or items such as grass or rope. You can also mount visuals on spacers to move them out from the background.
- Make your display interactive. Ask questions with lift up tables to see the answers or set up a board with lights that show the right match between visuals and descriptions.

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