



## 4-H Educational Displays

Educational displays are an important aspect of the 4-H Communications project as they enable 4-H members to convey a message visually to a wide audience. 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 and Content**

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. Picking a topic that is too wide will cause you to overcrowd your display or leave off important bits of information. Choose a topic that you can adequately cover in enough detail to be educational.

Educational displays can be created for a variety of audiences. It is important that you decide who your target audience will be as this will impact your choice of subject and design. For example, an educational display on the beef industry targeted at 5<sup>th</sup> graders may have very different information and structure from one targeted at Agricultural majors.

The content you use should be a direct reflection of your target audience. The ideas presented in your display should be intriguing enough to catch your audience's interest, but not so overwhelming that they feel intimidated.

If your display is intended for a younger audience, more hands-on learning is recommended. You may decide to use visuals like pull tabs or "lift and peek" tabs to get your audience involved in the learning. Another way to make a display interactive is to give the audience specific instructions on an action to perform. If your display is intended for an older audience, visuals like charts and graphs demonstrating relationships within the material can be valuable. Texts and facts should also be catered toward your specific audience. A younger audience will need more basic information broken up into simple sentences while an older audience will be able to process more complex thoughts and ideas.

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. All headings should be the same font, size, and style to create a consistent feel throughout the display. You may choose to vary the size, style, or font between subheadings and headings to create a pleasing visual effect.

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. All text should be readable from a distance of about 5 feet. 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)
- 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 at the front of your display. People who view the display may want to learn more by going to those books, websites, etc. How you cite your sources may vary by your age division. Juniors may simply list out the sources they used. Seniors should list sources in proper MLA or APA formats. Intermediates may be in a transitional phase.

The source section should be formatted or visually presented like other text on your display. In other words, it should not be handwritten on at the last moment; it should be part of the display itself.

It is crucial that you use reliable sources. Internet sources are valuable as long as they come from credible research-based institutions. For example, [www.bobsbeefranch.com](http://www.bobsbeefranch.com) would not be as respected a source as [www.hereford.com](http://www.hereford.com) (the official site of the Hereford Breed Association). The same is true for magazines, newspapers, and books. Credibility is key!

Personal interviews are also a great source of information and should be included on your source list when applicable. Just as with other sources, personal interviews are only as credible as the person. Choose experts on the subject, and be sure to state their credentials with your source information.

## **Elements and Principles of Design**

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.

Use your visuals to create areas for the viewer's eye to go to. An eye-catching visual makes viewers more likely to read the information surrounding it. Information should also flow from one heading to the next. Don't make your viewer search all over your display for the next logical piece of information.

## 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. Spacing should be uniform throughout the display. Use off-set visuals or text to break up solid lines of space or text.

## 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. Beware, however, of over-using borders. They should be used sparingly to retain their visual effect. If you put a border around every piece of information, it is no longer eye-catching and can create a very “busy” display.

## 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 be a full page doesn't look balanced. Alternate text and visuals throughout the display. Use a color scheme to tie everything together.

## Matting

You can make your display look more professional if you matt the various elements. Matting adds a three-dimensional effect that when used throughout the entire display creates a visually appealing picture.

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. You can also use a patterned matt for text. If you use patterned matting, choose complimentary colors to tie in with the plain matting, and be sure your pattern doesn't overwhelm the text. It's best to use only one pattern per display.

You can double matt sections of extra importance. Again, choose complimentary colors. It can look very nice to double matt with pattern and plain color matts.

Matt carefully making sure the edges are a uniform size. Ensure that all corners are securely fastened to prevent curling.

## 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

### **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

Expensive  
Hard to cut, but can cut in shapes

## 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



## **Creativity**

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

- Instead of just using a rectangular posterboard, cut it into a shape to match your topic. Don't forget to follow guidelines for dimension specifics.
- 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 tabs to see the answers or set up a board with lights that show the right match between visuals and descriptions.
- Use creative titles or "hooks."

## **Putting it all Together**

An Educational Display is an opportunity for 4-H members to convey a message to an intended audience. The amount of time and planning you put into your display will be reflected in the finished product. Have fun, tell your story, and put your best effort into your display.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Documenting Sources**

**Bibliography: a list of all your sources of information**

**Citation: the line of text that identifies a source**

Documentation allows your audience to see where you got your information from and gives credit to other people for their ideas.

On the front of your display, have a place for your Bibliography. You can also call this your Source List or Reference List. This list should be in alphabetical order by the author's last name or by the first word of the title if there is no author.

By the time you are a senior, you should be using a proper documentation format. There are many different styles of documentation. The MLA (Modern Language Association), the APA (American Psychological Association), and the CMS (Chicago Manual of Style) are the most commonly used formats. For Educational Displays, you should use either the MLA or the APA format. Whatever style you use, what is important is that you provide enough information to fully identify your source.

There are many online resources you can use to help you with the proper formatting of your bibliography and citations. Following are examples of formatting for some of the more common resources you might use.

#### **Examples of proper bibliography entries**

##### **APA book with one author:**

Author (last name, first initial). Date. *Title of book* (in italics; only first word capitalized).

Place of

Publication: publisher. (Note: second line is indented.)

Griffiths, J. (2008). *Equine science*. Gaithersburg: Equine Network/Source Interlink Media.

##### **MLA book with one author:**

Author (last name, first name). Title of Book (underlined; major words capitalized). City of

Publication: Publisher, Year. (Note: second line is indented.)

Griffiths, Jean. Equine Science. Gaithersburg: Equine Network/Source Interlink Media, 2008.

**APA book with two authors:**

Author (last name, first initial), & second author (last name, first initial). (Date in parentheses).  
*Title of book* (in italics; only first word capitalized). Place of publication: publisher.

Aaseng, N., & Aaseng, J. (1996). *Head injuries*. Danbury: Franklin Watts

**MLA book with two authors:**

Author (last name, first name), and second author (first name, last name). Title of Book  
(underlined; major words capitalized). City of Publication: Publisher, Year.

Aaseng, Nathan, and Jay Aaseng. Head Injuries. Danbury: Franklin Watts, 1996.

**APA magazine article:**

Author. Date of publication. Article title. *Name of Magazine* (in italics), *Volume or issue number* (in italics), Page(s).

Bennett, D. (2012, January). Hocks: you be the judge. *Equus*, 35-43.

**MLA magazine article:**

Author. "Title of Article" (in quotation marks). Title of Magazine (underlined) Date: Page(s).

Bennett, Deb. "Hocks: You Be the Judge." Equus Jan. 2012: 35-43.

**APA interview:**

Person interviewed. Date of interview. Type of interview (personal, telephone, email, etc.).

Rennekamp, R. (2012, January 19). Personal interview.

**MLA interview:**

Person Interviewed. Type of Interview (personal, telephone, email, etc.). Date of interview.

Rennekamp, Roger. Personal interview. 19 January 2012.

**APA website:**

Author. (Date Published). Name of website article. *Name of website* (in italics). Date, URL

Rennekamp, R., & Lesmeister, M. (2011, January). Facts about 4-H. Oregon 4-H. Retrieved February 2, 2012, from [oregon.4h.oregonstate.edu/sites/default/files/factabout4hpdf.pdf](http://oregon.4h.oregonstate.edu/sites/default/files/factabout4hpdf.pdf)

**MLA website:**

Author. "Name of internet article" (in quotation marks). Name of website (underlined).

Editor(s) of

website (if known). Date. Sponsoring institution. Date of access <URL>

Rennekamp, Roger, and Marilyn Lesmeister. "Facts About 4-H." Oregon 4-H. 2011. OSU. 2 Feb. 2012 < [oregon.4h.oregonstate.edu/sites/default/files/factabout4hpdf.pdf](http://oregon.4h.oregonstate.edu/sites/default/files/factabout4hpdf.pdf) >

**Examples of proper citation in text**

Both the APA and MLA styles use brief parenthetical citations in the text with full information in the bibliography. (CMS uses footnotes and endnotes which do not work well on displays). Generally, a parenthetical citation includes the author's last name and the page number(s) of the information used. The difference is that the APA puts a comma between the author's name and the page number, while the MLA does not.

**APA style:**

Youth who participate in positive youth development gain valuable life skills (Mitchell 99).

**MLA style:**

Youth who participate in positive youth development gain valuable life skills (Mitchell, 99).