Common Pitfalls of National History Day Students

1. **Annotated bibliography**
   - Annotations note all resources used in the creation of your project and explain how each contributed to your understanding or interpretation of the topic.
   - It is NOT a summary of the source.

2. **Balance between text and photos**
   - Projects should display/explain your topic using pictures and quotes and interpret the information in your own words.
   - Student-written text should compose the majority of your work.

3. **Documentaries**
   - To ensure documentaries will play on the contest day, be sure to bring it in multiple formats including CD, USB drive, and a computer.

4. **Interpretation versus regurgitation**
   - Students should analyze, draw conclusions from, and connect sources. This is not summarization or regurgitation of the information.
   - Information: The dog ran after the cat. The cat ran away.
   - Regurgitation: The dog ran after the cat. The cat ran away.
   - Interpretation: The dog likes the cat and the cat is scared of the dog.

5. **Interview skills**
   - Maintain eye contact with judges.
   - Speak articulately and clearly.
   - All group members should be prepared to answer questions.
   - Professional dress is necessary.

6. **No thesis**
   - A thesis statement is your main idea or argument. It must relate to the theme of NHD.
   - It answers the questions: How does it relate to the theme? Why do we care?

7. **Organization of project**
   - Entries should follow a general organizational scheme flowing from one subject to another.
   - It should include the thesis statement, background information, conclusion, context of your topic in the bigger picture, etc.

8. **Performance**
   - Props should be minimal and should be essential to the understanding of the performance. Less is more.
   - Blocking is where the actors should stand during the performance. It is important to practice before the contest so no one is blocked from the audience.
   - Sets should be minimal, functional, transportable, and informative.

9. **Preparation**
   - “Before anything else, preparation is the key to success.” —Alexander Graham Bell

10. **Primary vs. secondary sources**
    - A primary source is written during the time period being studied.
    - A secondary source is written after the time period of the subject typically using primary sources.
    - Be sure to note the difference.

11. **Topics that are too broad**
    - Topics should be narrow and focused on one specific time, person, or event.
    - See broad topics worksheet on okhistory.org/historyday.
      i.e. Civil War – Battles – Honey Springs Battlefield – role of the First Kansas Colored Infantry

12. **Understanding the concept of the project**
    - Know the big picture of your project. How does it relate to theme?

13. **Websites – linking to other websites and publishing**
    - If you are doing website, be sure to KNOW the rules about linking and embedding multimedia.
    - When you are finished with your entry, be sure to publish the website so judges can view it.