

Common Pitfalls of National History Day Students

- 1. Annotated bibliography**
 - Annotated bibliography notes all resources used in the creation of your project and explains 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.