

Oklahoma National History Day

Common Pitfalls

1. **Annotated bibliography**
 - a. An 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.
 - b. It is NOT a summary of the source.
2. **Balance between text and photos**
 - a. Projects should explain topics using pictures and quotes and interpret the information in your own words.
 - b. Student-written text should compose the majority of your work.
3. **Documentaries**
 - a. To ensure documentaries will play on the contest day, be sure to bring them in multiple formats, including CD, USB drive, and a computer.
4. **Interpretation versus regurgitation**
 - a. Students should analyze, draw conclusions from, and connect sources. This is not a summarization or regurgitation of the information.
 - b. Information: The dog ran after the cat. The cat ran away.
 - c. Regurgitation: The dog ran after the cat. The cat ran away.
 - d. Interpretation: The dog likes the cat, and the cat is scared of the dog.
5. **Interview skills**
 - a. Maintain eye contact with judges.
 - b. Speak articulately and clearly.
 - c. All group members should be prepared to answer questions.
 - d. Professional dress is necessary.
6. **No thesis**
 - a. A thesis statement is your main idea or argument. It must relate to the NHD theme.
 - b. It answers the questions: How does it relate to the theme? Why do we care?
7. **Organization of the project**
 - a. Entries should follow an organizational scheme flowing from one subject to another.
 - b. Include the thesis, background information, conclusion, context of your topic in the bigger picture, etc.
8. **Performance**
 - a. Props should be minimal and should be essential to the understanding of the performance. Less is more.
 - b. Practice where actors stand during the performance so no one is blocked and the audience can see.
 - c. Sets should be minimal, functional, transportable, and informative.
9. **Preparation**
 - a. "Before anything else, preparation is the key to success." —Alexander Graham Bell
10. **Primary vs. secondary sources**
 - a. A primary source is written during the period being studied.
 - b. A secondary source is written after the period of the subject, typically using primary sources.
 - c. Be sure to note the difference.
11. **Topics that are too broad**
 - a. Topics should be narrow and focused on one specific time, person, or event.
 - b. See the broad topics worksheet on okhistory.org/historyday
 - c. i.e. Civil War – Battles – Honey Springs Battlefield – role of the First Kansas Colored Infantry
12. **Understanding the concept of the project**
 - a. Know the big picture of your project. How does it relate to the theme?
13. **Websites – linking to other websites and publishing**
 - a. If you are creating a website, make certain you know the rules about linking and embedding multimedia.
 - b. When you are finished with your entry, be sure to publish the website so judges can view it.