ILLINOIS 4-H

Tips for Making an Engaging Display Board

What Makes a Good Display Board?

A good display board:

- Catches people's attention
- Is simple and clear
- Focuses on one key idea or concept so people can remember it
- Is uncluttered and easy to read
- May motivate action for the viewer (like the desire to learn more).

A good display DOESN'T:

- Overwhelm the viewer with an avalanche of information
- Cover everything a 4-Her learned on their project journey
- Make the viewer get really close to the board to be able to easily view and read the information that is included.

Planning Your Display

To create a good display, you should always start with planning!

- Always start by identifying what you want a person viewing your board to take away or learn. Remember folks usually spend under a minute (and sometimes even just a few seconds) looking at your display.
- Use your identified take away or learning goal to plan the information and visual aids to include.
- Think about using colors, text sizes, visual aids, and open space to convey your message clearly.
- Make a rough sketch or mockup before you put your actual display together. When planning remember that you shouldn't cover every surface of your display with text or content! White space should be used around margins and throughout the design to help make it easier to read the content and focus the reader's attention.
- Once you've decided on all your content, don't attach anything to the board right away. Instead, lay it all out and see how it looks. Make any needed changes to what you've

decided to include and where it will be attached in order to keep things well organized, easy to read, and succinct.

- Only after doing the above, attach your materials to the board in their final positions using glue, tape, or another adhesive.

Color Tips

The colors you choose can affect how easy things are to read, as well as how appealing the poster is. Use these tips to choose the right colors for your display.

- Use contrast! Use dark colors on light backgrounds, and light colors on dark backgrounds to make things easier to read and help focus your viewer's attention.
- Consider using colors to highlight important items or ideas. You can make important text an easy to read, but attention-getting color, or add a colored border around a photo, for example.
- Try to avoid using colors that are close to your background color as you won't be able to see the difference between the colors at a distance.
- Don't use too many different colors, as it can be distracting. Try to focus on using 2-3 colors maximum (not counting visual aids like photos and maps).
- Pick colors that look good together and aren't hard on the eyes. Online tools like Canva's free color wheel tool (https://www.canva.com/colors/color-wheel/) can help!
- Did you know that about 4% of the US population is colorblind? If you want to see what your colors might look like to someone with colorblindness, check out web resources like https://davidmathlogic.com/colorblind. A general rule of thumb is if you were to print your colors in grayscale, could you distinguish between them? If not, you may want to select colors with more contrast.

Lettering Tips

Making your poster easy to read and understand is really important. Use these lettering tips to help!

- Remember that posters are frequently viewed from 3 to 5 feet away. Make sure all text on your poster can be read from those distances. To accomplish this try using fonts between 24-36 pts for the general text on your poster (your title and other headers may be larger).

Here is 24 pt type

Here is 36 pt type

- Only use decorative/script text for overall titles to catch the attention of the viewer and not for body text on your poster. Make sure any font you use, including decorative ones can still be easily read by the average person.

This is a decorative font that is still readable.

Here is another decorative font that is readable.

Here is another one!

And another!

Here are some decorative fonts that are harder to read that you should avoid.

- Avoid using ALL CAPS if possible, as it's harder to read than mixed case text (text with lower and capital letters).

    Is it easier to read this mixed case text,

    THAN IT IS TO READ THIS ALL CAPS TEXT.

- Keep writing to a minimum on your poster. Use headings, captions, and bulleted lists to convey your message and avoid large paragraphs of text.
- Use different font sizes or styles (like **Bold** or <u>Underline</u>) to show the importance of different items on your board.

Visual Aids (Photos & Illustrations)

Using visual aids, like photos, charts, maps, and illustrations is important for capturing the attention of your audience.

- Photos, charts, graphs, and other visual displays of information should make up about 40% of your poster and should be large enough that they can be seen from a distance of 3-5 feet.
- Try to find images and illustrations that you have permission to use, and credit your image sources on your board. Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/) is one place to find copyright and royalty free images that people have given permission to use.

Other tips

Follow these other tips to help make your display great!

- Use rulers and guides to help align things neatly on your display.
- Don't use complex backgrounds that detract from the content or make it harder to read.
- Don't forget to proofread your text. Spelling and grammar errors take away from your presentation and make things harder to understand.
- You're encouraged to cite your sources for the information and graphics on your poster. Citations can be in a smaller font as they are not expected to be read at a distance, but are nice to have available to folks who want more information on the topic or want to know why they should trust the information you provided.

- Make sure all items you attach to your poster are attached securely with glue or other connective materials like wires, zip ties, or staples. Don't attach any items that are so heavy that your board won't be able to stand on its own.
- Don't be afraid to get creative and add interactive elements to your board! Just make sure those elements follow the same guidelines listed above.

Example Board

The display board example below illustrates a number of the tips included in this document.

- The display features one big idea, and the content on the poster supports this idea.
- Photos and illustrations make up 40% of the board and are large and clear.
- Decorative fonts are only used for titles and headings and are still easy to read.
- Text can be read at a distance (in reality this display would be on the standard 36" tall x 48" wide, three-panel display board) and is not overly wordy.
- The board uses 2-3 colors, and uses color to help organize information and call attention to items.
- Sources are credited (in the bottom right corner) and photos have credits (written in small text alongside them).

- The board uses white space to make things easier to read and follow.
- The board is well organized and can be understood with a quick glance.

Credits

Information in this guide is inspired by the following content from other state's 4-H programs:

Iowa State 4-H Exhibit Tip Sheet: 4-H Poster Exhibits – What is the judge looking for?
(https://www.extension.iastate.edu/4hfiles/projects/hotsheets/PosterTipsheet.pdf)
New Mexico State University 4-H Tip Sheet: Making Posters (https://nm4h.nmsu.edu/documents/Poster-Making_R-191.pdf)

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