



2018–19 Florida History Day
“Triumph and Tragedy in History”

GETTING STARTED

Do you wonder about the past? Why events occurred? Why some people became famous? If so, Florida History Day is for you. Let’s get started!

NHD Contest Rule Book

Step #1 is to download a copy of the National History Day Rule Book (it’s free!) at <https://www.nhd.org/sites/default/files/Contest-Rule-Book.pdf>. You and your parents should read the Rule Book carefully before you begin to work on your entry. Although your project may start as a class assignment, it must adhere to certain specifications if you intend to compete at higher levels. Contact the state coordinator if you need help understanding the rules and requirements.

Process Paper

All entries except those in the historical paper category must include a process paper. In a maximum of 500 words and four paragraphs, you must describe how you came up with your idea; the steps that you took to research your topic; and how you actually created your exhibit, paper, documentary, performance, or website. The final paragraph should summarize your thesis statement and conclusion and explain how your topic relates to the annual theme.

The process paper is not the place for you to state everything you learned about your topic. That information should be presented in your entry. Rather, the process paper confirms to the judges that you worked with an original idea, conducted original research, and created your project using your own energy and creativity. Examples of process papers relating to prize-winning entries can be found at www.nhd.org/project-examples.

Annotated Bibliography

All History Day entries must include an annotated bibliography that is attached to the process paper (documentary, performance, exhibit), placed at the end of a historical paper, or embedded in a website. The bibliography lists only the sources that actually contributed information to your project. Primary sources are listed first, followed by secondary sources. Following each citation, an annotation—one or two sentences (or more if you want)—explains how and why that source was useful. There is no limit to the number of words in the bibliography. If your project includes many photos from a single source, you don’t have to cite every image individually. Rather, you can cite the collection once and note in your annotation that the images appear throughout your entry.

National History Day and Florida History Day require citations to follow one of two style guides: the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, published by the Modern Language Association of America, or *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian, published by the University of Chicago Press. You must use the bibliography, footnote, and other style formats in one book or the other (i.e., formats can’t be mixed).

Thesis statement

A thesis statement is a one- or two-sentence explanation in which you make a claim about your research topic and summarize the argument(s) and analysis that will follow. Your thesis statement should pinpoint the main idea of your topic, and it should be expressed clearly and early in your project, regardless of the category. Your thesis statement will help you to remain focused as you develop arguments and present relevant evidence that lead to your conclusion. It also lets judges know what to expect or look for and how you intend to interpret the significance of your topic.

Judging Process

FHD staff do everything possible to prevent bias on the part of judges and to protect the anonymity of students. The selection of judging teams is based on several criteria: 1) a team includes three people; 2) two members have judging experience; 3) at least one person has historical research experience; and 4) at least one individual has experience in the category being judged. However, if judges don't show up on contest day, this ideal combination may be altered. Judges receive a thorough packet of evaluation guidelines before the contest and a verbal orientation on the day of the contest. **FHD and NHD consider the judges' decisions to be final.**

When judges review an entry, they are looking for ideas and connections that you have made. For example,

- Does the topic relate to the contest theme?
- Does the entry merely describe an event, or does it place the topic into historical context, addressing such matters as time and place, and cause and effect?
- Does it address the historical significance of the topic—that is, its subsequent impact or influence?
- Does the entry clearly state a thesis and a conclusion?
- Is the research based on a wide variety of primary and secondary sources?
- Have these sources been analyzed and interpreted?

You should keep these questions in mind as you plan and prepare your entry. Examples of the judging sheets that state and national judges use are available on the NHD web site.

You should not prepare a formal presentation for your interview with the judges. Rather, they will ask you questions about your topic, how you conducted your research, what you learned, and why your topic is significant. No doubt you'll be nervous, but just rely on what you know. Don't get flustered if you're asked a question that you cannot answer. Simply say, "That wasn't part of my research, but here is an important point that was . . ." and finish the conversation with confidence.

NHD Curriculum

National History Day has developed a set of curriculum guides to help students and teachers with the process of researching a topic and creating an entry. *Making History* includes six booklets:

- *A Guide to Historical Research Through the National History Day Program*
- *How to Create a Historical Exhibit*
- *How to Create a Historical Documentary*
- *How to Create a Historical Performance*
- *How to Create a Historical Paper*
- *How to Create a Historical Website*

Content descriptions and ordering information are available on the NHD web site (www.nhd.org).