

NATIONAL HISTORY DAY JUDGING PROCESS

The goal of History Day is to provide young learners with a positive experience, regardless of whether they win. We want all students to have a positive discussion of their scholarship with the judges and get meaningful written feedback.

As a judge, you are the face of History Day for our participants today. It is important that the interview and judging be fair and consistent. **History Day is likely the most difficult project a student has completed.** Converse with students in a way that allows them to feel proud of the work they have done.

GREET

Introduce yourself. A smile goes a long way!

Give students a brief **explanation** of the judging process and set them at ease.

Request a copy of their **paperwork** (process paper and bibliography). Website judges have already viewed this and can start the interview.



READ

Skim the written materials and review the project. You may not have time to completely read the entire packet. Focus on the annotated bibliography.

You will **keep one copy** for your judging team. You can refer back to the packet when you return to the judge room.



VIEW

Exhibit judges should read the text of the display. Remember, the students should not give you an oral presentation about their work.

Performance and **Documentary** judges should give the signal to begin. Make sure the students introduce themselves and the title of their presentation. As you view entries, make preliminary notes on your judging forms. You will be able to expand on these later.

Website judges have already seen the project. The student may refer to the website during the interview, but should not present it for the judges.



INTERVIEW

Ask the student(s) questions about their project, research, or topic. The interview is a chance for **students to share their understanding** of their topic and process. Student answers do not weigh heavily in your overall evaluation.

Do not offer suggestions for improvement during the interview. Take notes! You will be able to include comments in your written feedback, which will be given to students after the contest.

Thank the student(s) and keep one copy of their paperwork.



RANK

Return to the judging room to make your decisions on top ranking projects. Judge teams must **agree on the entries they select** to move forward.

History Day staff will let you know the specific number of projects you are selecting.



WRITE

Each judge will write their **own comments**. Written feedback is the most valuable for student learning. Checkmarks in column ratings do not need to be identical, but should be similar to your co-judges.

Final Checklist for Judging a History Day Entry:

- Does this student's work demonstrate historical research and scholarship?
- Does the student make a strong argument, connected to the annual theme?
Remember: Student views may differ from your own.
- Does the student use the project to support and prove their argument?
- Is this student communicating their ideas in an organized and effective way?

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TIPS FOR HISTORY DAY JUDGES

JUDGING RATINGS

History Day evaluates entries in relative terms of “Superior,” “Excellent,” “Good,” or “Needs Improvement.” There are no points assigned to the evaluation columns. Each entry is ranked in relation to the other entries you see in your judging pool today. You should not compare these projects against projects you may have seen at other History Day competitions.

THE INTERVIEW

At the end of each presentation you will have the opportunity to ask students questions about their entries. Students are excited about the opportunity to talk with you, but may be extremely nervous. Give them time to respond. Do not assume that a pause before responding means a lack of knowledge. Make sure you ask them at least three to five questions. Try to ask all groups a similar amount of time worth of questions.



Appropriate Questions:

- What was a helpful source?
- How does this topic fit the theme?
- What was a challenging part of your History Day experience?
- Is there anything you would like to tell us that we haven't asked about?



Inappropriate Questions:

- Where do you go to school?
- How much money did you spend developing your project?
- Is this topic in line with your own religious/cultural beliefs?

Rephrasing Questions:

Many students, and especially those with English as a second language, may ask their judges to repeat or clarify a question. Instead of repeating the question verbatim, try rephrasing it or breaking apart a multi-part question.

Oral Critiques and Judge Feedback

The interview is the student's chance to show off their knowledge and experience. Participants will explain and clarify their work. While we respect the content knowledge of our judges, the interview is NOT an oral project critique or a time to share your insights on the topic.

WRITTEN COMMENTS

The key to History Day judging is to provide positive, but critical, evaluations of each entry. Begin your comments with the most positive feature of the entry. Critical comments are best phrased as suggestions (e.g. “You may want to...,” “Did you consider...,” or “Other issues important to this topic are...”).

Constructive commentary is valuable for the students:

- Students who are advancing want to know how they can improve their work
- Students who are NOT advancing want to understand why their project was not selected

You do not need to make detailed comments on your judging form during the interview itself. Make enough notes about the strengths and weaknesses of an entry to allow you to write meaningful comments later.



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