

TIPS FOR WINNING HISTORY DAY PROJECTS

Know your subject

The judges can ask you anything. Be sure you know how to pronounce names of people and places. Be ready to answer questions such as, “Why is this topic important to you?” or “How did your topic affect history?” If you really don’t know, don’t try to bluff — say “I don’t know.”

Follow the rules

Even if you have an excellent presentation, and won the district contest, you can be graded down or disqualified if you don’t follow one of the rules. Read them carefully.

Use primary sources

Be sure you understand the difference between primary and secondary sources, and use as many primary sources as possible. Sources you can find locally can make your presentation strong and unique.

Choose a unique topic

If there are three presentations on the same subject, the judges aren’t likely to choose them all to place. It’s okay to work on a popular subject, but make sure your presentation has something special to set it apart.

Talk to adults

Your presentation must be your own work, but ask for help from parents, teachers, and as many others as you can. Ask them what they remember (and include these as interviews in your sources). Ask them to review your presentation with you and give you suggestions to improve it.

Consult the experts

Many sources are now available online, but it still takes serious work to find good materials there. Try calling history teachers, librarians, university professors, or other professionals to get information. Some of them may be too busy to help you, but others enjoy sharing their knowledge with young people. They may be able to lead you to sources you wouldn’t be able to find on your own.

Make sure it looks good

Your presentation doesn’t have to be flashy or expensive. It does need to be designed and laid out well. Go over the details and make sure everything looks neat and complete. If you have moving parts or equipment, make sure they work. Bibliographies and all written materials should be spell checked and printed so they are easy to read.

Keep it simple

You only have a small amount of time and space. Even if you know the complete history of World War II (and some of you do), you can’t cover it all in ten minutes. Narrow it down to one or two ideas and show how these are connected to a larger subject.

Have fun!

The judges can tell if you’re excited about your topic. The winners are often the ones who can communicate their enjoyment to the judges. And—not everyone can win, so if you had a good time working on your presentation, you haven’t lost anything!