WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NHD NATIONAL HISTORY DAY

# WELCOME TO THE
# NHD in WI STUDENT GUIDE

Starting an NHD project? Read this guide to help you get going! This will take you through each step in your NHD journey.

If you are stuck with something specific, look on our website for help. Of course, ask your teacher, too! We are also available for questions—send us an email, we are happy to help.

Read advice from State Finalists!

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"This isn't a normal history project. You need to put in 100% effort."

## QUESTIONS?
Contact NHD in WI at:
historyday@wisconsinhistory.org

"Don't procrastinate, listen to your teachers, make sure your topic relates to the theme, be prepared and make your project outstanding."

VIEW MORE RESOURCES ON OUR WEBSITE!

wisconsinhistory.org/nhd

# TOPIC AND THEME

## THE THEME

Each year, NHD announces a new theme for *all* students to relate their projects to. Some examples are: "Leadership and Legacy in History," "Turning Points in History" or "Taking a Stand in History."

⇨ Find the complete theme guide online! Make sure you look at *all* parts of the theme.
⇨ If there is an "and," think about the words together.
⇨ Struggling? Look on our website for more tips.

## THE IDEA

Every great research project starts with a great idea, so brainstorm!
⇨ Think about one of your interests:
  o Space? Politics? Music?
⇨ Narrow in on something.
  o Is there something you want to know more about?
⇨ Do some quick searches.
  o Are there a lot of results that pop up?
  o Will it be hard to find enough sources?
⇨ Talk through your ideas with others!

"Pick a topic you're actually interested in… trust me. And maybe pick a unique topic, you'll learn more."

## THE TOPIC

A *strong* topic will:
  ✓ Fit with the theme—*all* of the theme!
  ✓ Don't be too broad or too narrow. Be sure you do not drown in the amount of sources, but also do not have to search far and wide to find any information.
  ✓ Be able to fit within the rules of a project. Meaning if you are doing a:
    o **Documentary** or **Performance** you can fill 10 minutes and be visually compelling.
    o **Paper** you can write between 1,500 – 2,500 words.
    o **Website** you can say all you need to say in 1,200 words.
    o **Exhibit** you can tell viewers everything in 500 words or less.

A strong topic will *not*:
  ✓ Be a biography of a person. No person changed history alone. Be sure to include the context of how this person's accomplishments fit into history.
  ✓ Be something you are not passionate about. NHD is an adventure—if you aren't excited about your topic and having fun finding out more, it will be a rough ride.

## WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

➢ Following a theme makes you think about something from a new perspective.
➢ Using this new perspective shows your audience you *analyzed* history and created your own findings.
➢ If you plan to compete: judges look for theme connection. It is 20% of your total evaluation!

# RESEARCHING

"Don't slack off on research and start citing your sources at the beginning. The longer you wait, the harder it is to annotate and keep track of them."

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT
Don't just look for information about your topic; learn about what happened before and after. This will help you make connections and strengthen your understanding!

"Get started right away, because the more work you do, the better your project will be. Also get more primary sources and take notes!"

## SOURCES

## PRIMARY
Anything created from the time of the event.

**Use these sources as your window to the past to find out what actually happened. They are very important! Gather as many as you can.**

## SECONDARY
Anything created outside the time of the event by people who were not there.

**Use these sources for background information and guides to primary sources. Start your research looking at these!**

### LEARN MORE ON OUR WEBSITE!

## BIAS
Look out for *bias: when the opinions of an author influence a source.* Bias does not mean the source is bad, but as a historian, you need to be aware of it so you can examine all evidence fairly.

## WHERE TO LOOK
⇨ Start with Wikipedia or for context and source ideas.
⇨ Books are a great start.
⇨ Visit libraries!
⇨ Watch a documentary!
⇨ Interview someone.
⇨ View pictures.
⇨ Ask for help anytime!

## ORGANIZE
*Where did I find that? Who was the author?* **Don't forget to cite!** Whether in a notebook or online, record:
✓ Title, author and date.
✓ How it was helpful.
✓ Any keywords used to search.

## WHY DOES THIS MATTER?
➢ This is how you will show your work. Researching is investigating and you are the detective asking questions. Find the evidence!
➢ In the real world, you have to research. How else are you going to find the best price for a customer? Or tell a patient whether or not a rash is contagious? Or pick the best defensive line for Fantasy Football?

# THESIS CRAFTING

## WHAT IS A THESIS?
- ✓ *It's an argument.* Bring in your analysis and tell the audience what you are going to show in your project.
- ✓ *Answers "so what?"* Tell your reader why the topic matters.
- ✓ *It's a work in progress.* Thesis statements take time, so keep editing and revising.

## WHY DOES IT MATTER?
- ➤ Your thesis is the first thing people will read (or hear). It will let the reader know what you are trying to prove and introduce them to your project.
- ➤ A thesis will help you organize your project. Think of it like a roadmap; it should connect to all your main points.

## ASK FACT OR ARGUMENT?
Can someone read your thesis and disagree with you? Do not state facts, but make an argument that you will defend in your project.

# ANALYSIS

## WHAT IS ANALYSIS?
- ➤ It is what *you* find from all the research.
- ➤ It is how you interpret your topic.
  *Ask yourself the following:*
  - ✓ What lessons can be learned?
  - ✓ Did the historical event end in the best way possible?
  - ✓ Were there other ways to solve this problem or issue?

## WHY DOES IT MATTER?
- ➤ This is what your audience will take away with them—what do you want them to know?
- ➤ Analysis shows you thought about your research and made connections. You didn't just write down a bunch of dates, but you thought about how and why this historical event occurred.

## DID YOU EXPLORE ALL SIDES?
Are there different sides on your topic? If so, include them, but you do not have talk about each one equally. Finding these sources shows you know your topic.

## EXAMPLE OF THESIS CRAFTING*
- ⇨ *"Pollution is bad for the environment."* This is a fact and doesn't tell the reader what to expect in the project.
- ⇨ *"The government should spend more money on preventing pollution."* Getting closer! This is an argument, but doesn't tell the reader "how" or "why."
- ⇨ *"By not funding the Clean Water Act, the government's lack of concern for preventing pollution will increase the rate of airborne illnesses and infection for generations."* This tells us the how and why! The author will provide the evidence within the project.

*Caution: strong thesis statements do not magically appear after three attempts. Keep editing and talking through your ideas with others!

## THINK WITH THE THEME
Always circle back to the theme! Having a theme causes you to see the information in a new way.

## TEST YOURSELF
- ☐ Explain your topic to someone in only 30 seconds.
- ☐ Write out your main points and see what they have in common.

# SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW

## DOCUMENTARY (10 MINUTES)
⇨ Do you have and know how to use editing software?
⇨ State your thesis within the first minute.
⇨ If you have tons of pictures or footage, this is a good choice!

## EXHIBIT (500 WORD LIMIT)
⇨ Do you enjoy gluing, cutting and decorating?
⇨ Subtitles help organize your information and are clear to your viewer.
⇨ Wait until you edited and confirmed everything you wrote before gluing things down.

## PAPER (1,500 – 2,500 WORDS)
⇨ Do you enjoy writing?
⇨ Invite teachers, parents or professionals to read and give feedback!
⇨ Only category that cannot be done in a group.

## PERFORMANCE (10 MINUTES)
⇨ Do you enjoy public speaking?
⇨ Props are not required, but may be useful!
⇨ Drama is fun, but don't forget to still include an argument! Include your thesis early and often.

## WEBSITE (1,200 WORD LIMIT)
⇨ Do you enjoy working online?
⇨ Make good use of the navigation bar! It will help your viewer.
⇨ Double check your annotated bibliography and process paper is accessible!

"Don't just throw your project off to the side, use all the time you have to work on it."

"Wait until nearly the end before pasting. I wish I'd waited to paste ANYthing on my board until I was sure it was my final."

## PROCESS PAPER
500 words describing all the work you did to make this project. Write about:
✓ How you picked your topic.
✓ How you researched.
✓ How you created your project.
✓ How your topic fits with the theme.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY
➢ *The purpose of a bibliography* is for people to see your research.
➢ *The purposes of a citation* are to give proper credit to a creator and for someone to be able to find the source.
➢ *The purpose of an annotation is* to explore how the source informs your work.
Be sure you:
✓ *Divide* your citations between Primary and Secondary.
✓ *Stay consistent* in citations; follow the guidelines for either Chicago Style or MLA.
✓ *Use* complete sentences.
✓ *Look* at examples online!

## INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP?
Projects can be done in a group or by yourself (except for the paper, which must be done individually). If you choose a group, be sure you pick a person/people who:
✓ Are as motivated as you.
✓ You can trust to work hard.
✓ Has a similar schedule as you.

# FINAL TIPS

"Listen to your teacher even if you don't want to. They have some really awesome ideas to make your project the best."

## COMPETITION IS OPTIONAL
Making a NHD project is an accomplishment in itself, anything else is icing on the cake! You are welcome to compete, but only if *you* want to.
*What does it mean to compete?*

## EXPAND ON THE THEME
Don't leave your teacher or judges questioning what the theme is! You don't have to talk about each part equally, but at least mention all parts.
*Example theme: Conflict & Compromise*
Your topic may have more conflict than compromise, so highlight that!

## SHOWCASE
You get to present your research like a historian does!

"Look upon the competition as an opportunity to learn rather than an assignment."

"Ask for family, teachers and professionals to proofread or make edits in order to make your project better."

## GO BEYOND GOOGLE
*Dig deeper!*
There is information out there that is too golden and one-of-a-kind that Google cannot store. Go to an archive or ask a librarian to show you how to find it.

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## INTERVIEW
A brief (5-10 minutes) question and answer with 2-3 judges.

"Do your best, no matter how far you make it in the competition just know that you did great."

"Take one step at a time, do not get stressed. It may seem like a lot, but good research takes a while."

## JUDGING
Those judges evaluate your project and give you feedback!

"Don't be nervous. Just have fun and be confident in yourself! Whatever happens, you'll do amazing!"

## THERE IS NO LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT IN HISTORY
*Keep revising, keep searching!*
Don't get frustrated if you can't get your thesis just right or words aren't flowing together like they should. Ask for help—and be open to feedback! Take ideas into consideration. Historians are always improving and editing their work.

## MOVING ON
If you move on to the next contest, edit! Use the feedback to grow and improve.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CONTESTS ONLINE!