

Decoding the Judging Criteria

Historical Argument: Argument (Thesis)	<p>A historical argument, or thesis, is the foundation for the project. Not only should students have a strong argument that addresses the significance of a topic in history, but the project itself should actually explain this idea, and provide analysis and evidence to support it.</p> <p>A historical argument must be incorporated into the project and be clear to those who read or view it. However, students are not required to label their historical argument in or on the project.</p>
Historical Argument: Theme	<p>Students must connect their project and topic to the annual theme, "Communication in History: The Key to Understanding." This should go beyond just using the words, but connecting to the fundamental ideas in the theme. This connection must be evident in the project itself, not just in an interview or process paper.</p>
Wide Research	<p>Wide research refers to the variety of types of sources students used in their research, both primary and secondary. Students should base their projects on a variety of credible sources. The number of sources is not as important as their quality.</p> <p>Just because a source was found on the internet does not mean it is bad source. Investigate the citation and annotation to learn more about <i>what</i> the source is and <i>where</i> it was located.</p>
Primary Sources	<p>In their research, students should have found primary sources, which are sources connected to the event by time or participation. These sources should have helped them to develop and support an historical argument, not just provide illustration for their project.</p> <p>This criteria is about the quality and use of sources, not the number of sources a student accessed. Some topics are easier or harder to research - so quantity is not always a sign of success or a lack of effort.</p>
Historical Context	<p>Historical context is the larger setting in which a topic took place - the relevant economic, social, intellectual, religious, cultural, and political conditions of the place and time. Students should understand and show connections between relevant context and their topic/argument.</p>
Multiple Perspectives	<p>A perspective is one point of view, one person's experience, or one side of the story. Students should have examined more than one side to the story, by looking for sources created by people with different viewpoints and/or showing differing points of view in their project.</p>
Historical Accuracy	<p>Facts matter. Students should present accurate historical facts upon which they base their argument, the historical significance of their topic, and the project itself.</p> <p>We do not expect judges to be experts on all of the topics they review. Do your best to identify obvious issues with credibility, or statements that do not ring true to your previous knowledge of a topic.</p>
Significance in History: Draws Conclusion	<p>Drawing a conclusion about how a topic changed history is one of the major differences between National History Day project and a book report, or a biography.</p> <p>Please remember that these are young scholars. We can expect a well-crafted argument based on evidence, but are not expecting each argument to present entirely new scholarship.</p>
Significance in History: Impact	<p>So what? Students should think about the impact or consequences of a topic and consider the results in both the short and long term.</p>
Student Voice	<p>This refers to a student's ideas and analysis. The argument and supporting analysis must be clear in the project. Students should not let the supporting evidence, such as quoted material from primary or secondary sources, overwhelm their own analysis.</p>

Rules Compliance

Disqualification

There are very few rule violations that disqualify an entry from a competition:

- Reuse of an entry
- Plagiarism
- Tampering with another student's entry

You must alert History Day staff to these violations. We will investigate and follow-up with you about next steps. It causes considerable problems if judges simply note disqualifiable rule violations on the judge rubric without notifying History Day staff in advance!

All other rule violations may influence a project's ranking.

Judges should refer to the category-specific guidelines for rules in their category.

- **Minor Rule Infractions** can be noted on the evaluation, but should not be the focus of a judge's written commentary. Minor rule infractions should not influence a project's ranking, unless projects are exceptionally close in quality. These include failure to use to correct citation format, not including credits on images, incomplete information on a title page, etc.
- **Major Rule Infractions** have the potential to give a project an unfair advantage over their competition. Major violations must be taken into consideration when deciding rankings. These include student-composed word counts in websites and exhibits, time limits in performances and documentaries, missing an annotated bibliography, etc.