

## **FAIR DISPLAYS: CHAOS TO SYMMETRY**

“A display is a good deal like an individual. To be a success in life it must be friendly and appealing, have color, balance, personality, and even a sense of humor on occasion. It must please before it can inform. Any exhibit lacking these qualities is likely to fail.” (Effective Library Exhibits: How to prepare and promote good displays. Second Edition. By Kate Coplan, 1974).

### **PURPOSE OF 4-H EXHIBITS:**

1. To present an image that 4-H is a valuable learning experience.
2. To stimulate interest in 4-H projects for youth and adults.
3. Inform the public of the variety of 4-H projects.
4. Lure people into the 4-H buildings and activities.
5. PRIDE - youth make visits to their exhibits to gaze and admire their achievements” with family and friends. And let us not forget parents’ pride when they see their child’s work displayed for others to see!!!

A display need not be elaborate; but it should be well planned, organized, and executed. You want to project the best image and content to the public. Planning can help you to arrange items and display them to their fullest potential and impact. If your display catches someone’s eye, it will also catch their mind and interest to look further. Displays that are cluttered confuse the mind and may be ignored. No matter how great the variety of items to be displayed, the exhibit should not appear crowded or jumbled. Each item should be plainly seen with no item obscuring another item. Think about levels and building structure into your displays.

### **BASIC PRINCIPLES IN PLANNING EXHIBITS\*:**

SHAPE: The basic shape of the fair displays is a big rectangle, how do we display all the items to relate to this basic shape?

1. Use simple basic shapes like squares, rectangles, circles, triangles, etc.
2. To add contrast or special effects you may want to consider using variations on punctuation mark shapes like question mark, asterisk, exclamation point. These shapes can add emphasis and have a built in meaning.
3. Avoid mixing up shapes too much. Use 1-2 shapes in different sizes such as large to small. REMEMBER what is confusing to the mind is often over looked!

COLOR: Is the display appealing and eye catching or are there too many colors making the display look in disarray?

1. Contrast light and dark colors using light accents in a dark board and dark accents on a light board.
2. No more than 3 colors: light, dark and one other.
3. Harmonize colors, NEVER CLASH.

Covering the background (table and wall) is just as important as the materials which are to be displayed. Backgrounds can accent and make items stand out.

*\*Summarized from Library Displays: Their purpose, construction, and use. By Mona Garvey, 1969.*

**SPACE:** Depth to a display can add interest and contrast.

1. Plain flat surfaces are dull and easily overlooked. Project items by placing them on a bowl/box giving the display a 3-D effect.
2. On the wall place items on shelves or arrange in geometric shapes.
3. Decide what you want to have prominence or importance. Make that one idea, color, shape, or texture to stand out or dominate in the display. Make the item project from display by surrounding other items around it leaving a blank space, lead into the item with lines, or point to the item with a flat arrow.
4. Organize the display items as simply as possible and in a coherent manner.

Remember to keep exhibits as simple as possible using only a few colors, one or two basic shapes, and one or two different sizes of those shapes.

**LINE:** Directs the eye to where you want people to look.

1. Block, frame, or set off items.
2. Group items together and surround them with string, yarn, paper, or tape. Repeating color, line, and texture in the display.
3. Remember the “invisible line” between each of the displays at the fair. Do you want this line to blend or contrast?

**TEXTURE:** The visual or tactile appearance of the surfaces: smooth-rough, hard-soft, cool-warm, etc. Some fabrics add texture to a display such as burlap.

**Mounting Items:**

- Tacks/push pins
- Straight Pins/safety pins
- Tape (masking, double faced, duct, etc.)
- Rubber cement
- Staples
- Peg board fittings

**Shelving Items:**

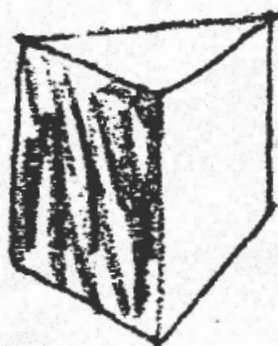
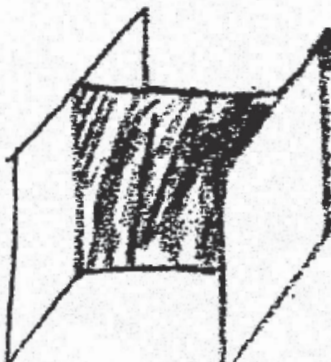
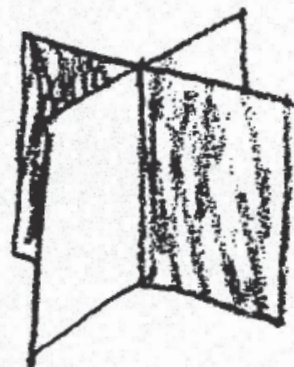
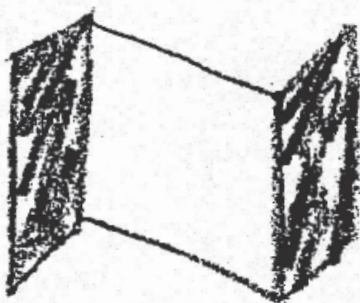
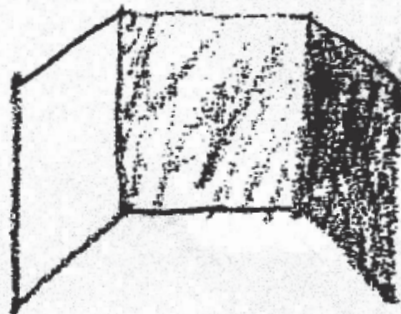
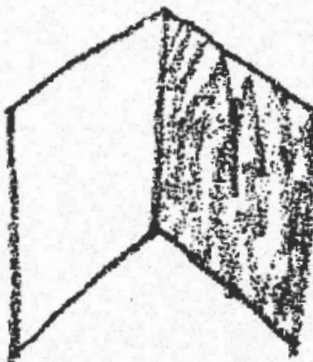
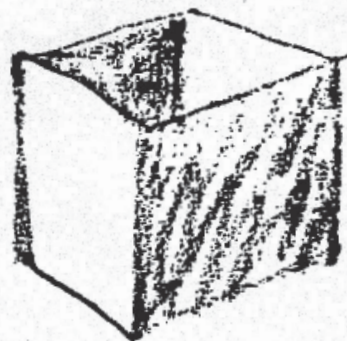
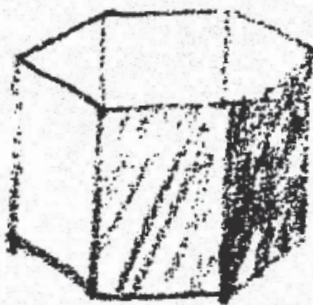
- Purchased shelving
- Wood for shelves then use any of the following to create space between shelves: bricks, baskets, boxes, bowls, folding chairs, etc.
- Ironing board

**Items from around the home that may help in building structure:**

- boxes, crates, laundry baskets, plastic bins
- suit cases
- bowls/cans
- shoe/clothes racks
- small fences

**Tool box:**

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| tacks, push pins              | paper clips and a variety of other clips |
| straight pins/safety pins     | round head fasteners                     |
| variety of nails              | rubber cement                            |
| screw hooks, eye lets         | white glue                               |
| stapler and staples           | scissors                                 |
| heavy duty stapler & staplers | pliers                                   |
| tape (masking, Scotch, duct)  | hammer                                   |
| string                        |  |



### **Items carried in another box (just in case...):**

construction paper  
markers  
letter stencils  
3"x5" cards  
ruler  
garbage bags  
drill

### **SUPPLIES FOR EXHIBITS**

#### Paper:

- variety of textures, colors, weights and cost available.
- poster board, construction, newsprint, wall paper, wrapping paper, cardboard, etc.

Advantages: easy to work with, can be glued, taped or stapled

Disadvantages: easily torn, may be damaged by water

Paint: variety of colors, applications, types (water or oil base, spray or brush, etc.), dried surfaces (flat, glossy, enamel, etc.) Spray paints come in a variety of colors, form hard smooth surfaces, dry quickly, with little or no clean up. Spray paints can be expensive and will form runs if not applied correctly.

Painting with a brush is considered the best technique for covering most surfaces, frames, and outlined areas. Water base paints come in a variety of colors and shines and clean up is easy. Oil base paints also come in a variety of colors and shines; however, clean up requires paint thinner.

Roller painting is the best way to cover large areas. It is more practical and less expensive than spray painting and less time consuming than brush painting.

Fabric: can add texture and color to exhibits. Fabrics come in a variety of colors, weights, textures, and weaves.

- Burlap can add texture to a display, comes in a variety of colors however burlap can be expensive and will ravel unless the edges are finished.
- Felt will not ravel and comes in a variety of colors, but. it can be expensive.
- Consider using bed sheets because they are already hemmed, cover a large space, can be inexpensive, come in a variety of colors and can be easily washed after fairs.

#### Peg Board:

- has holes uniformly punched
- available in 1/8" or 1/4" thickness accommodates a wide range of hanging devices
- can be painted
- needs to be framed to provide structure and balance
- difficult to put tacks into

Plywood: comes in a variety of thicknesses

- can be painted
- holds nails and screws
- needs to be framed
- difficult to put tack into
- can be expensive and usually good only on one side
- edges need sanding because of splinters
- depending on thickness can be heavy

Particle Board: Same as plywood but additional disadvantage is that it is made from sawdust so the board can be chipped, does not hold screws or nails well against tension or pull, and if left plain can be damaged by water.

Homosote:

- comes in two thickness 1/2" and 5/8"
- fairly light weight
- can be painted
- pins and tacks go in easily
- may need to be framed
- screws and nails leave holes
- expense (\$16.00 per sheet)

Cork Squares:

- hold tacks and pins
- difficult to paint
- small size
- costly

Cardboard:

- easily painted
- holds pins and tacks
- inexpensive or free
- easy to work with
- needs backing or framing
- easily bent or scuffed
- if left plain can be easily damaged by water

*Source: Mary Clark, 4-H Leader, June 2, 1993*