

HELPSHEET

EXHIBITION AND DISPLAY BASICS

ATTACHING

- Avoid presenting objects less than 90cm or more than 200cm from floor level (except very long images). Galleries set the 'eye level' for hanging pictures at 155cm above floor level.
- Paintings should never be suspended from a single nail (unless very small). They should hang from either two (museum grade) picture hooks firmly fixed to the wall or from two wires suspended from a picture rail.
- Light weight graphics, diagrams etc can be fixed to walls or display boards with Velcro adhesive patches.
- **AVOID** Three things to avoid when hanging or installing an exhibition: string, sticky-tape and pins. All are unreliable and unsightly.

LABELS AND SUPPORT MATERIAL

- Every object or artefact should be clearly identified with a label. These should be typed (on white or off white), not handwritten, using a clear modern font such as Helvetica Regular, Geneva or Arial in a size of at least 18 points. 1 point 'extended' spacing can be considered for easier reading.
- Labels should be set in two sizes, one for general labels and the other for extended labels (the standard labels in most public galleries are 19cm wide by a minimum of 9cm high, with a 1cm margin).
- Some galleries place all identifying labels along walls, screens and pedestals so that the top edge of the label is always exactly one metre from floor level.
- They can be printed on adhesive backed paper and fixed to cardboard or Fome-cor, before being cut to size.
- Labels should be placed to the lower right of the object on the supporting wall, pedestal or plinth with a fixed sight line.
- On a dark background, a lot of white labels can dominate the objects. A good test is to squint at the display to see if the labels stand out at the expense of the objects.
- If the labels are printed on the same colour paper as the background this problem will be reduced or eliminated.

EXPLANATORY TEXT

- Consistency in lettering and design and set in the same font.
- No greater than 50 characters wide, or more than 200 words in length.
- Free of jargon, unexplained specialist or abbreviated terms.
- Expression should be in simple concrete language.
- Long words occurring at the end of a line should not be hyphenated, but kept complete and placed on the next line

MOUNTING TEXT OR GRAPHICS

NB The techniques discussed here for mounting and laminating must never be used on archival material or original photos.

- There are several backing materials available such as screen board, Fome-Cor and Corflute. These materials can be cut using a sharp craft knife or scalpel and a metal ruler.
- To adhere paper to backing:
Spray contact adhesive or rubber cement
Perkins paste avoids paper swelling and wrinkling. This glue is not suitable for resin coated papers commonly used for photographic prints
One of the best materials to use is double sided adhesive paper sheet, or double sided tape
Adhesive Fome-Cor combines the backing board with the adhesive. It is the quick easy and more expensive option.

All these products can be purchased from art suppliers

- To protect labels that will be on display for long periods, laminating is relatively inexpensive and will save on replacement costs

CASES PLINTHS PEDESTALS AND PARTITIONS

- Should be stable, neat and clean.
- Can be a good way of influencing people traffic.
- May be necessary to place a heavy weight in the base of a plinth to ensure it is not top heavy.
- Display cases should be insect and rodent proof, lined with soft material, inclined towards the viewer and lit so as not to cast the exhibits in shadow.

Ref: 'The Exhibition Handbook', Christopher Heathcote, Museums Australia(Vic)
'Museum Methods', Museums Australia Inc (NSW)

LIGHTING

- No exhibit – especially fabric, a painting, drawing, print or original photograph should be placed where it is in direct sunlight at any time of the day.
- Efforts should be made to keep ambient lighting subdued with any windows near exhibits being blocked out or fitted with UV filtering screens for the duration of the display. Recommended light levels for specific objects during display can be obtained by contacting the MA (Vic) office.
- Check the lighting of an exhibition. Walk through the space, looking for shadows and any points that may shine into the visitors' faces.
- It is always best to light works hanging on walls from an angle, positioning spotlights so that they pan over several exhibits.
- The recommended lighting levels for collection items on display can be obtained from the MA (Vic) office.

TEMPERATURE

- No exhibits should be placed close to or over radiators, heaters or heating ducts. Ensure that exhibits are not placed near hot lights or electrical equipment.
- The recommended temperature level for museums, galleries and libraries is a steady 21 degrees (+ or – 1 degree).

DISPLAY BASICS – A final check

- **Simplify your exhibition area** – Be selective with objects on display. It is not necessary (and not advisable) to have every item in your collection on display.
- **Tell the story** – Does the display emphasise the most important aspects of the story or object? Does it grab you? An effective display technique is to follow a planned scheme which systematically outlines the exhibitions story line.
- **Explain the Object** – Is the display easy to understand?
Always try to show an artefact so that its function is apparent.
- **Information** – Is the text easy to read?
- **Design and Aesthetics** – Does the spatial relationship between the items help the display?
It should be obvious at a glance which parts of the display are related and which are not and how labels relate to objects. Begin designing the layout of the exhibition well before it is scheduled to take place.
With this in mind think about how you can ‘set the scene’ or introduce the exhibition. A different coloured wall featuring the title of the exhibition and any sponsor logos, provides an introduction for the viewer and can be used to orient them into the exhibition space.