

National History Day (NHD) – General Rules for All Categories

The following summary highlights the most important rules every National History Day participant must follow, regardless of project category. It is intended as a student-friendly reference and does not replace the official NHD Rule Book.

Rule	What You Need to Know
1. Contest Year	Your project must be created during the current NHD contest year. Work may begin after the previous National Contest concludes in June.
2. One Entry Only	You may enter one project in one category each contest year. Entering the same project in multiple categories or contests is not allowed.
3. Individual or Group Projects	Projects may be completed individually or in groups of 2–5 students (except papers, which are individual only). Every group member must participate in the research and interpretation. Once competition begins beyond the school level, group members cannot be added or replaced, and the topic or category cannot be changed.
4. Student Research	Students must complete the research, design, and creation of the project themselves during the current contest year. Projects and research from previous years cannot be reused.
5. Plagiarism	All information, images, audio, video, and quotations must be properly cited. Plagiarism—including copying another person's work or failing to credit sources—results in disqualification .
6. Tampering	Students may not damage, alter, remove, or interfere with another student's project. Doing so results in disqualification.
7. Annual Theme	Every project must clearly connect to the current National History Day annual theme and explain that connection throughout the project.
8. English Requirement	Entries must be submitted in English unless your Contest Coordinator approves another language. Any non-English material must include English translations.
9. Copyright	Copyrighted materials may be used only under educational fair use. Projects should not be posted publicly without permission from the copyright owner.
10. Reasonable Help	Teachers, parents, and mentors may teach skills, answer questions, and provide feedback—but students must make all historical decisions and create the final project themselves .
11. Equipment	Students are responsible for bringing all necessary equipment, props, and technology unless the Contest Coordinator states otherwise.

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12. Costumes	Costumes are only allowed during judging for the Performance category. Students in all other categories should dress normally.
13. Prohibited Materials	No weapons (real or replica), live animals (except service animals), live cultures, or items that could damage the venue are permitted. If it is not allowed at school, it is generally not allowed at an NHD contest.
14. Judge Interview	Be prepared to answer judges' questions about your project. Do not give a prepared speech or presentation during the interview—the project should speak for itself.

Top Reminders for Success

- ✓ Create a **new project** every contest year.
- ✓ Conduct **your own research** and analysis.
- ✓ Cite **every source** accurately.
- ✓ Stay within your category's specific rules.
- ✓ Make sure your project clearly explains its connection to the annual theme.
- ✓ Ask your teacher or Contest Coordinator if you are unsure about a rule before submitting your project.