

HANDOUT: TIPS FOR TEACHERS ON HISTORY DAY WEBSITES

As with any other History Day category, research should be completed, text written and images collected before students begin building a website. Students don't receive their exhibit boards before they start research; they should not receive access to the NHD Website Editor before they begin researching or even writing. Given the ease of copying and pasting information into the NHD Website Editor, it is of the utmost importance that students have written the text and chosen the images before they begin building a site.

Some Hints on Website Creation

Try it yourself: Create your own page, either to just become familiar with the system or to create a sample site or to create a tutorial for students.

Manage student logins: Create a universal system for students' usernames and passwords so you can easily access their site at any time for grading, and eventually judging and submitting purposes. The system I use for national registration is username = first initial + last name + last four digits phone number; password = last four digits of phone number. You could substitute student ID numbers or just leave it at student names and initials.

Warn students to keep login and password private: Students should guard their NHD Website Editor login information, just like any other personal information. While not common, knowing another students login gives non-group members the ability to access the website.

Save text and images to a backup: If students will be working on websites at home and at school, encourage them to save all text and images to both places, or carry all images and text on a flash drive. This flash drive also is a good backup of information in case there are technology problems.

Envision websites as the technological equivalent of exhibits.

- Exhibits should not have too many sections; websites should not have too many pages
- Exhibits should not have "picture sections"; websites should not have "picture pages"
- Exhibits can use interactive elements to draw people in but should not rely on flash; websites should certainly use interactive elements, such as video or audio, but should not allow flashier elements to be the primary focus
- Exhibits should follow a specific order (context, main point, impact; websites should follow a similar order in the navigation

Plot it out on paper first: Requiring students to hand in paper copies of their text before they start site-building will help decrease the amount of Internet cut-and-paste. It will also help them to have a better organizational structure to their website overall.

Review the rules: There are many technical rules that can trip up students in this category (for example: Students are not allowed to use external links in their website). Be sure to familiarize yourself with these rules in advance of the competition.

Make sure the sites are published: Students must regularly "publish" their website before the changes will appear on the web. Remind them to put the most current version of their project on the Internet by clicking the orange "publish" button, especially right before the competition!

Double check websites: Once the site is published, students should check the site on a number of web browsers (i.e. Internet Explorer, Safari, Firefox).