

DOCUMENTATION/PREPARING FOR COMPETITION
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When you begin preparing for an Arts Competition, the documentation process should begin at the same time.

Documentation is one of the most controversial areas of competition. Many feel they aren't capable of doing documentation; many feel that documentation is unimportant. However, without documentation, there is just no way that a judge can tell what the entrant intended to do or show. You could do the most beautiful piece of work seen on the face of the earth; but without documentation, all the judge could say is "yes, they did nice work." There would be no way to tell what time period, what methods were used, where the original idea originated, whether your work would be considered appropriate for the time period intended.

An excellent example would be a piece of embroidery that used flowers...some time periods were quite stylized, while others were very natural. Embroidery is a very old art, but certain stitches were not used before certain times. If we are going to do work as authentically accurate as we can, we must research!

Before you begin a project for competition, there are some things to consider:

- 1) Decide what you want to do.
- 2) Ask or discuss your idea with other artisans
- 3) Consider your own level of ability and talents
- 4) Find out the criterion required for your project
- 5) Begin your research

When deciding on a project, do as much research as you can. Do not rely on only one source; some sources are not necessarily accurate. As you research, make notes of what you find and *be sure to write down the book title, URL, etc.* Do this for two reasons: 1) you will need it for your documentation, and 2) you may want to go back and find it again.

Authenticity involves coming as close to the original as possible. Obviously this can't always be done when materials are no longer available. This is where the "creative" part comes in. Whenever your project involves the "creative" process, explain why you did this.

Primary Sources and Secondary Sources. These are a bit different from doing a college research paper. Here a primary source for a specific Elizabethan gown would be an exact reproduction of a specific painting that is hanging in a museum. (Obviously most of us will never get to London to see the original picture -- which is the true primary source and to be more precise, the garment itself). A secondary source would be a sketch of the costume in a costume book. Whenever possible, refer to primary sources.

Note: If you are really interested in becoming a champion in a specific competition, you might consider doing something that isn't done too often. Costuming, for example, is usually a crowded field. We all do costuming, but in a competition often there are many, many costume entries, and trying something that isn't as common-place may give you a better chance.

When you have worked long and hard on a project, it is a bit like baring your soul to put this project out for judging. Artisans need to develop a thick skin. When you are judged by others, you are

subject to all their human frailties and opinions. Many a fledgling artisan has been totally destroyed by a thoughtless judge. Many of our most excellent artisans do not enter competitions for this reason; however, entering a competition is an excellent way to receive opinions of your work and one way to become known. Do not let anyone discourage you if you know your work is good. On the other hand, try to see the judge's viewpoint and strive to benefit from the judge's criticism when you do your next project.

Writing the Report

Once your research is completed, it is time to write your documentation. Documentation is often the key to the success or failure of your project in a competition, and documentation is the one area that seems to be the most intimidating. When preparing documentation there are two things to keep in mind:

- 1) You will assume that the judges *know absolutely nothing* about your entry and you will prepare your documentation to educate the judges accordingly.
- 2) You will assume that the judges *know absolutely everything* about your entry and you will prepare your documentation accordingly.

As stated earlier, in order to do an authentic piece of work for arts competition, you will be doing research. When you do that research, write down what you find and where you found it. Always write down the name of any book, article, URL, etc., where you find information. There is nothing as disheartening as trying to remember where you saw information on fabric painting in 1306.

Once you have written down these bits and pieces, you are ready to prepare your documentation. Documentation ideally should be typed, or at least printed using a very neat hand. (Calligraphy is beautiful, but remember that judges have a lot to do and deciphering calligraphed documentation takes time).

Tell the judges what your piece is; the date the piece was appropriately used; and the place where the piece might have originated. If it has a purpose or function, even if it is just an exercise, explain it. Explain what tools, styles, materials, and techniques you used. Also mention the dates and places of all these things and why you chose them.

If you have used modern materials, tools, or techniques (and this is perfectly acceptable), say so. Also say why you may have mixed period styles, techniques, tools, materials. It is certainly acceptable to do so; just say why. It is also very important to include photocopies of period examples of what you are trying to create. Photocopies may also be very necessary, if you are doing something really different, or if your piece is a reproduction of something period. If your piece is musical, provide a score; if you used a recipe, you do not have to provide a copy of it, but you must list ingredients used. Copies of diagrams or patterns, or dance-step patterns are also very useful.

Now make the text as brief and concise as possible. Because of the time constraints on judges at these competitions, a very lengthy piece of documentation will probably not be read. If you can give a complete documentation on one page...that would be ideal. Try not to have your written copy longer than two pages. Add whatever photocopies you have as appendices after your written work.

If you feel you can't explain your work in anything less than a small book, then provide some kind of a preface or outline for the judges. If you chose to do your documentation in the way a period person may have done, make sure the judges can understand you. If you find you have written a

small book, enter it in Research Writing.

While it may be helpful to include a specific book, it would be better to photocopy your example(s) and include with the written documentation. Never just place a book with your entry and expect that to be your documentation! Entries get moved and your book could easily be separated from your entry and the page you intended as documentation could easily be "lost."

Also make an effort to answer the kinds of questions that the judges will be asking of your piece as they go through the individual judging criteria for each subcategory. The more you explain, the easier it is for judges to understand what you have done, and the easier it is for them to judge your work intelligently.

An ideal way to do your documentation is to use the criterion from the Arts and Sciences Competition you plan on entering. Prop it up by your typewriter, computer or where you plan to hand-write your documentation, and follow it step-by-step, covering each area thoroughly so that your documentation will include everything necessary to inform the judges. Contact your local Minister of Arts and Sciences or the Kingdom Minister of Arts and Sciences for this information.

Now list your sources in your bibliography. Sources can include a class or a teacher, even an SCA teacher. Even if you did not use any materials from a specific book, list all books researched. If on line research has been done, list URL. Remember that some information from the internet may not be accurate, so use with caution unless you are dealing directly with reliable sources such as Museums. Try to have a few books, as well as internet sources.

Bibliography should include Author, title of book, publisher, where published, and year. Example: Hartt, Frederick, *S History of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*, Third Edition, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., N.Y., 1989. URL's should include as much information as possible. Example: http://www.virtue.to/guest_authors/hungarian.html, translated and summarized by Julia Palotay Szent-Györgyi, 1520's gown of Mary of Hapsburg, Hungarian National Museum.

Once you have completed your project and it is ready for competition it should be clean, neat, presentable, and as authentic as you can possibly make it.

When you present the project for judging, there are some things you can do to enhance your project. For example, a brewing project could be displayed on a cloth, with flowers, and crystal for the judges to use. In other words, show your project off to its best advantage. Always take a small tablecloth or cloth to place under your entries.

A well-prepared entry is one that has been given a lot of thought; has been thoroughly researched; has excellent documentation which clearly shows how the project was done and why, if necessary, modern materials and methods were used as substitutes. Don't leave a stone unturned. Don't leave anything open-ended so the judges will have to guess what you had in mind -- they won't!!! Cover your bases! And good luck and don't be discouraged. Everybody starts somewhere!

Note: Keep a Record of your entries: Once you have begun entering Arts and Sciences competitions, keep a complete record of what you entered, what category it was in, which competition, the date and whether or not you received a first, a scroll, or whatever "rewards" were part of the competition. After a year or two, it is difficult to remember what you entered where, and this record will be very helpful to you.