

Paving the Way for STEM in History Museums
Constructing a Narrative: Writing about STEM for a Specific Audience

LABEL WRITING APPROACH

Organize interpretive materials hierarchically, first establishing the topics and themes of the exhibition, then moving to sub-themes, and then to specifics regarding individual artifacts.

Big ideas:

- Identify the unifying topic, theme or idea for the exhibition. Layer information supporting that idea from general to specific—from exhibition title, to introductory statement, to section and focus texts, to individual artifact labels
- Regardless of sequence or adjacencies, individual elements such as artifact labels should be able to stand on their own, offering specific information as well as reinforcing the themes of the exhibition.
- While no single component can provide all possible answers, exhibition materials should generally address the questions the visitor may have, such as:
 - “What is it?”
 - “When is it from?”
 - “Why is it here, and why should I care?”
 - “How was it used?”
 - “How was it made?”

Considering style:

- Focus on conveying no more than one to three ideas
- Be clear and concise
- Set a consistent word limit and readability level for all writing
- Use strong verbs and an active voice.
- Begin by identifying concrete visual details to assist viewers in guided looking.
- Avoid unsupported, qualitative judgments such as this “artifact is the finest example of its type.”
- Avoid large or infrequently used words, and make an effort to define specialized terminology.

