

Social Studies Fair Divisions and Categories

Divisions

- **Division I** (Grades 3-5)
- **Division II** (Grade 6-8)
- **Division III** (Grade 9-12)

Categories

Special Topic: America 250 - On July 4, 2026, our nation will commemorate and celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The journey toward this historic milestone is an opportunity to pause and reflect on our nation's past, honor the contributions of all Americans, and look ahead toward the future we want to create for the next generation and beyond.

Students are invited to engage in research and present on the founding of America or the lasting contributions of West Virginia as the new nation was being formed. Projects within this category may include elements of other categories but must emphasize the creation of our country 250 years ago.

This category will be available for the 2024-25 and 2025-26 academic years.

Sample Themes:

- The Declaration of Independence: Voices of Freedom
 - West Virginia's Role in America's Founding: A Historical Journey
 - The Founding Fathers: Crafting a Nation from the Ground Up
 - Life in the 13 Colonies: Everyday Heroes of Independence
 - The Road to 1776: Key Events Leading to American Independence
 - West Virginia's Early Settlers: Contributions to a New Nation
 - Symbols of Liberty: The American Flag and Its Evolution
 - The Revolutionary War: Turning Points in the Fight for Freedom
 - Building a New Government: The Constitutional Convention and Its Legacy
 - America at 250: How the Ideals of the Founding Fathers Shape Our Future
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- **Anthropology** is the study of how culture is developed by people living, thinking, and working together. This category examines issues related to how a particular group of people view the world; how they do things and the mind sets they use to understand the world.

Sample Themes:

- Many Factors Determine the Differences between the Pueblo and the Cherokee
- The Influence of Technology on the Amish Culture
- Religious Influences on the Aztec Culture
- Aztecs, Egyptians and Mound Builders Share Cultural Similarities
- The Impact of Globalization on Folk Culture

- **Economics** is the study of how people labor to satisfy human wants and needs. This category examines issues related to the production and distribution of goods and services. People use a variety of economic systems to attempt to satisfy their unlimited needs and wants with limited resources.

Sample Themes:

- Sports Cards Have Value
- The Effect of Low-Fat Diets on the Snack Industry
- Your Choices Determine Your Future
- Making Entrepreneurship a Successful Venture
- The Effects of a Global Economy on Your Personal Finance

- **Geography** is the study of how the earth and its features interact with the effects of human activity. This category focuses on the relationship between people and their environment. Our environment influences our lifestyle and culture, provides opportunities and imposes limitations. In addition, people influence the environment. Geography studies the physical and cultural elements of the environment, as well as the interaction between the elements.

Sample Themes:

- Global Warming Affects You and Me
- West Virginia Has Been Popular Among German Immigrants
- Rain Forest Destruction Imposes Consequences for Everyone
- The Nile River is a Lifeline for the People of Egypt
- The Role of Physical Geography in the Destruction of the Ninth Ward

- **Political Science** is the study of how groups develop and use different structures to govern their lives. This category deals with the study of the processes, principles and structures of government, political institutions, and the study of law making and law enforcement.

Sample Themes:

- The Media Influences Election Races
- Checks and Balances Among the Three Branches of Government
- Rights and Responsibilities of Student Citizens in America
- The Constitution of the United States is a Living Document
- The Power that Lies in the Electoral College

- **Psychology** is the study of mental processes and behaviors. This category investigates human behavior as it is influenced by an individual or a group. It examines both inherited and socially influenced behaviors.

Sample Themes:

- Phobias Can Rule a Person's Life

- Roadside Memorials Can Give Comfort to the Grieving
- The Healing Power of Laughter
- Advertisements Can Be the Deciding Factor
- Sleep Impacts Our Physical and Mental Well-Being

- **Sociology** is the study of human social behavior. This category investigates both the behavior of groups and the behavior of individuals as members of groups.

Sample Themes:

- Stereotyping Causes Many Assumptions
- The Refugee Impact on a Society
- Illegal Immigration Consequences Are Far-Reaching
- There Are Advantages and Disadvantages to Immigration
- Agrarian School Year May Be Obsolete In Today's Society

- **State and Local Studies** is the study of the life and development of an individual, a people, a state, a county, an event or an institution. This category records and explains past and present events of a local area or of West Virginia in general. It investigates the interrelationship between cause and effect, continuity and change, and other factors that historians use as they try to understand the past and the present.

Sample Themes:

- West Virginia State Parks Bring Recreation to Tourists and Locals Alike
- Women Writers of West Virginia Have Contributed Much to Our Libraries
- West Virginia Labor History Shapes Both Sides of the Bargaining Table
- West Virginia Rail Trails Are Built Along The Old Railroad Routes
- Our Community Began With One Family

- **US History** is the study of the life and development of an individual, a people, an event or an institution within the United States. This category records and explains various aspects of the history of the United States. It investigates the interrelationship between cause and effect, continuity and change, and other factors that historians use as they try to understand the past and the present.

Sample Themes:

- The Civilian Conservation Corps Aided in the Employment of Citizens During the Depression
- The Leaders on Both Sides of the Battle of the Alamo Determined the Fate of Texas
- The Seven Years' War In Europe Gave England All Land East of the Mississippi
- Media Coverage of the Viet Nam War May Have Been A Determining Factor of the Reactions of American Citizens
- American Men and Women Experienced Discrimination and Segregation During World War II, but They Met the Challenge and Persevered

- **World History** is the study of the life and development of an individual, a people, a country, an event or an institution. This category records and explains various aspects of the history of areas outside of the United States. It investigates the interrelationship between cause and effect, continuity and change, and other factors that historians use as they try to understand the past and present. Students must consider a variety of perspectives in addition to their own and those of their counterparts, then determine how to communicate those perspectives through an oral presentation with the help of a physical display.

Sample Themes:

- Gen. Douglas MacArthur Crafted the Foundation of the Japan We Know Today
- The Industrial Revolution in Great Britain Brought Change to the Lives and the Work of People Around the World
- Alternative Energy Sources Change Lifestyles Worldwide
- The Holocaust Is Repeated In Acts of Genocide Across the Globe and Throughout History
- Women Have Contributed Heavily to the Medical Profession Throughout History

West Virginia Social Studies Fair: Steps to a Successful Project

The purpose of this guide is to provide information on how to complete a social studies fair project. Ideas are given on how to choose, develop, and display a project and how to prepare for judging. Although a lot of hard work goes into preparing a project, remember that the purpose of a project, which reflects you and your interests, is to provide you with an enjoyable learning experience, so above all, enjoy working and doing research because SOCIAL STUDIES IS FUN!

Steps to a successful project:

1. Understand the information in this guide and the fair rules: Before you start your project, familiarize yourself with the social studies fair rules, along with these suggestions. Also, review the required abstract form, the social studies fair categories, and the scorecard.

2. Ask your teacher to explain anything you do not understand.

3. Pick your topic: Get an idea of what you want to explore! Choose a topic for your project that deals with an area of social studies that interests you. Use the list of categories to help. You can also find ideas in books, magazines, textbooks etc. List the categories or ideas that you have selected and pick a specific topic. Start thinking about the purpose of your investigation and why you chose your topic.

4. Research your topic: Go to the library or internet and learn everything you can about your topic. Look for the unexplained or unexpected. Talk to professionals in the topics that you are interested in. Take notes on what you learn and keep track of the sources you use with a bibliography. Come up with a list of research questions that will help drive your

investigation.

5. Organize: Organize everything you have learned about your topic in an outline and begin a rough draft of your abstract.

6. Draw conclusions: Describe any conclusions you were able to draw as a result of your investigation. How do these conclusions relate to your essential or research questions?

7. Write your abstract (required): Using the required form, write an abstract. Include a clean copy of the abstract with your display. You will also need to submit your abstract when your project passes from the school to county to regional to state fairs.

8. Design your display: Now that your research and abstract is finished, you will create a display to show what you have done. Neatness, clarity, and organization are keys to a successful display. Check spelling, punctuation, grammar, and the accuracy of your information. Your display may include whatever objects that are not excluded by the rules. Your display should include title, questions, conclusions, and abstract. Refer to the rules for the list of items that may NOT be included in your display. Collect relevant images, maps, charts, and artifacts that illustrate your topic. Visuals can enhance your project's appeal and help convey complex information.

9. Prepare for judging: Your project will be judged using a point system based on your abstract, your display, and your oral presentation. The oral presentation is an important part of the judging process. During your presentation, you should discuss:

- why you chose your topic,
- how you gathered your information,
- what your research questions are,
- what observations you made,
- and what conclusions you reached.

10. You may want to write note cards or refer to parts of your display to plan what you are going to talk about. Rehearse what you are going to say. Practice in front of your family and friends. Keep in mind the judges are looking for a student who has learned from their research. Although it is natural to be a little nervous about presenting, remember that the judges are not there to trick or embarrass you. They are interested in you and what your project is all about, so be pleasant, courteous and enjoy yourself. Above all, show them that you are proud of what you have accomplished!

11. Engage with Feedback: Listen to the feedback from judges. Use this feedback as an opportunity to improve your project and learn for future endeavors.

West Virginia State Social Studies Fair

2025 Official Abstract

Each project must include a completed copy of this abstract form. An abstract may be handwritten or completed on a computer. You may add additional space between questions, but the final abstract may be no longer than **three** pages. The bibliography is not included in the page count. Bibliographies may be as long as necessary. **A COPY OF THE ABSTRACT MUST REMAIN WITH THE PROJECT DISPLAY AT ALL TIMES.** It is recommended that you bring extra copies of your abstract on fair day in case your primary copy is misplaced.

Project Title: Enter Title Here

Division:

Category:

Type:

1. Explain the purpose of your investigation and/or the reasons why you chose to investigate this topic.
2. List the essential questions or research questions that drove your investigation.
3. Describe your research methods and the types of sources you used as part of your investigation. How did you obtain your information?

4. Are your sources of information valid? Explain how you validated your sources.
5. Write a concise summary of your investigation. Describe your most important findings and explain why they are important or relevant.
6. Describe any conclusions you were able to draw as a result of your investigation. How do these conclusions relate to your essential or research questions?

Bibliography

Your project must include a complete bibliography written in either APA or MLA format. Consult the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) for help with formatting your bibliography: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>

Sample Score Cards and Rules

- Use the Score Cards as a rubric to help refine your project
- Be sure to review and understand all rules
- Be sure to review prohibited items list

Projects with prohibited items will be disqualified!

West Virginia State Social Studies Fair

2025 Judges' Score Card

Affix Award Label
Here

Judging Criteria

Score

Abstract and Research Methods	0-5 points per line
▪ Purpose of investigation is well-defined.	
▪ Quality essential questions / research questions are used to drive the investigation.	
▪ Project employs appropriate research methods using a variety of valid sources.	
▪ Abstract is free of grammatical, punctuation and spelling errors. Abstract length does not exceed 3 pages plus bibliography.	
▪ Written summary provides a comprehensive overview of purpose, research methods, findings and conclusions.	
▪ Conclusions are supported by sound evidence and are tied to research questions.	
▪ Project goes beyond reporting facts. Student analyzes information; draws connections between ideas, events, or time periods; demonstrates the relevance of the research; or makes future predictions.	
▪ References are appropriately cited and documented in either APA or MLA format.	
Abstract and Research Methods Section Total	40 Points Possible

Oral Presentation	0-5 points per line
▪ Introduction captures audience's attention and provides a clear statement of purpose.	
▪ Presentation style is creative and well-organized. Use of notes is limited and does not detract from the presentation.	
▪ Student makes eye contact with judges and speaks in a clear and confident voice. Facial expressions and body language demonstrate interest and enthusiasm in the subject matter.	
▪ Presentation demonstrates a strong level of understanding of purpose, content, findings and conclusions.	
▪ Student uses elements of the physical display to support and/or enhance the oral presentation.	
▪ Closing provides an appropriate summary of the project's purpose, findings, and conclusions.	
▪ Responses to judges' questions demonstrate knowledge of purpose, methods, findings, and/or conclusions. Student responds appropriately if unable to answer a judge's question.	
Oral Presentation Section Total	35 Points Possible

Physical Display or Multimedia Presentation	0-5 points per line
▪ Display is self-explanatory and highlights the most relevant information.	
▪ Data and other information are arranged coherently.	
▪ Display is creative and/or unique.	
▪ Display is neat, well-organized and free from grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors.	
▪ Artifacts, charts, photographs, or technological devices are used effectively to enhance the display.	
Physical Display Section Total	25 Points Possible

Total Score	100 Points Possible
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COMMENTS

- Strengths
- Areas of Improvement

Place Awarded (circle):	First Minimum Score: 90	Second Minimum Score: 80	Third Minimum Score: 70	Honorable Mention
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RULE COMPLIANCE - Rule violations may result in disqualification. JUDGES: Immediately report all suspected rule violations to the fair director or the director's designee. Violations must be reported prior to the conclusion of judging.

- ☐ Physical or multimedia display exceeds display area limitations (36"x30"x48"). If so, document actual size: W:____" D:____" H: ____"
- ☐ Project poses a safety hazard or contains prohibited items (see rules for a list of prohibited items).
- ☐ Other rule violation: _____



RULES AND REGULATIONS 2024-25

I. Levels of Authority

1. The fair coordinator (school, county, regional or state) has the final decision on matters pertaining to the fair if these matters are not covered in fair regulations.
2. Disqualification of projects not meeting the project rules is the responsibility of the fair coordinator(s).
3. Any challenge at the school, county, regional and/or state level must be submitted within 1 business day following the fair. Once the official results have been finalized on fair day, the fair director will only modify or overrule a judge's decision in the event of an obvious mathematical error in the scoring process.
4. The fair coordinator at each level of competition (school, county, regional, state) has sole and final authority to resolve issues, concerns, conflicts, or disputes at that level of competition. State fair coordinators will not intervene in matters related to school, county, or regional fairs. For example, a county fair coordinator may not intervene in a dispute at a regional level fair. The final authority lies with the regional fair coordinator in that instance.

II. General Rules

5. Each project must include a physical display, oral presentation, and written abstract (in the approved format with a complete bibliography). A project that does not include all three of the required components shall be disqualified from competition.
6. Emphasis must be on methods of research, inquiry, creative problem solving and predictions regarding the issues rather than on "displays" or "collections of artifacts."
7. Student, school or county names must not appear on any part of the project or abstract with the exception of projects about community or family histories.
8. Students may ask others for help and direction, but they must do all of the work themselves.
9. Projects may be modified or improved between each level of competition; however, the theme must be maintained.
10. Once a project competes as a group project at any level of competition, it must be entered as a group project in all subsequent levels of competition, even if other members of the group withdraw.
11. A student may enter only ONE project. For example, a student participating in a small group project may not also enter a second project in the fair as an individual or a member of another small group.
12. Each project must represent the unique work of the student(s) who develop it. The fair director may disqualify a project if it is determined that the student(s) duplicated the work of another student (i.e., two projects from the same school or county are nearly identical), committed plagiarism, or engaged in other egregious violations of generally accepted academic integrity standards.

III. Registration

13. The registration process for school and county fairs will be determined by the school or county fair coordinator.
14. County fair coordinators are responsible for registering projects for regional fairs using the WV State Social Studies Fair Online Registration System at www.wvssfair.com. Use of this system is mandatory. Detailed information on the use of the Online Registration System will be provided to county and regional fair coordinators.
15. Regional fair coordinators are responsible for registering projects for the State Social Studies Fair. Detailed information on the registration process will be provided to regional fair coordinators.
16. At the State Social Studies Fair, students are not required to register or "check in" on the day of the fair. Upon arrival, students may proceed directly to their assigned project numbers and assemble their projects. Project numbers will be posted to www.wvssfair.com at least one week prior to the fair date.
17. It is the responsibility of the fair coordinator (county or regional) to ensure the accuracy of registration information (student names, project titles, category selections, etc.) prior to submission.

IV. Levels of Competition

18. There will be four levels of competition: school, county, regional, and state.
19. Counties may send only their first place winners in each Division, Category and Type to the regional fair. Regions may send only their first place winners in each Division, Category and Type to the State Fair in Charleston. A first place winner is defined as the highest scoring project in the Division/Category/Type with a score of 90 or above. A project must score a minimum of 90 out of 100 points to move on as a first place winner to the next level of competition. If no project scores 90 points or better in a certain category then no project from that category will move on to the next level of competition.
20. In the event that a first place project at a regional fair is unable to attend the state fair, a second place project may be substituted if:
1) The substitution is made BEFORE the regional fair coordinator submits project information to the State Social Studies Fair; AND 2) The second place project scored 90 or above at the regional fair. NO substitutions may be made after project information has been submitted to the state.

V. Project Classifications

21. All projects must be classified by the exhibitor at the time of entry by division (grade level), category (subject), and type (individual or group).
22. Divisions: Division I (Grades 3-5), Division II (Grade 6-8), and Division III (Grades 9-12).
23. Categories: Anthropology, Economics, Geography, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, State and Local Studies, United States History, World History, and Special Topic: America 250. The Special Topic: America 250 category will be available for the 2024-25 and 2025-26 academic years.
24. Types: Individual – Only one person works on the project and deliver the oral presentation alone; Small Group – Two to five students work on the project and deliver the oral presentation together.
25. A regional may submit no more than ONE first place project in each division / category / type for competition at the state fair. It is thus possible for a county to send 27 individual and 27 small group projects to the regional fair and the region could send 54 projects to the State Fair (27 individual and 27 small group).
26. Projects in a specific division / category / type will compete only against other projects of the same division / category / type. For example, a project classified as Division I, Anthropology, Individual will only compete against other Division I, Anthropology, Individual projects.
27. If a classification is questioned, a final determination will be made by the school, county, regional or state coordinator.

VI. Project Displays

28. Each project must include a physical display. The display may be a traditional physical display with artifacts, a multimedia presentation, or a combination of both.
29. The display area must be no larger than 30 inches front to back, 36 inches wide, and 48 inches high. No part of the physical or digital display may extend beyond the established size limitations. Any project exceeding the maximum established dimensions will be disqualified from the competition.
30. The display must be assembled on tables provided by the WV State Social Studies Fair. Students are NOT permitted to bring their own tables.
31. The space under the table directly beneath the project may be used for storage.
32. Items may hang from the front of the table (table cloths, charts, etc.).
33. Display items may NOT be placed in the aisle, even during the oral presentation.
34. Items of value should not be left unattended with the project display. This includes computers, DVD players, MP3 players, digital photo frames, collectible items (coins, stamps, etc.), and any artifacts that might be easily pilfered. Such items should remain in the student's possession at all times. Judges will allow time for students to return these items to the project display immediately prior to the oral presentation.
35. Food items may be included as part of a physical display, but must remain in sealed containers at all times. Food may not be offered to judges, other participants or members of the public for consumption. Consideration must be given to individuals with food allergies. The Fair Director may order the removal of any food item that poses a health or safety risk to others.

VII. Electronic Devices

36. Electronic devices (personal laptops, DVD players, MP3 players, cell phones, digital cameras, handheld gaming equipment, or audio recorders) may be incorporated into the physical display and/or oral presentation. A digital display such as a laptop may be used exclusively as the physical display or presentation. Electronic devices should not be left with the project display. Such items should remain in the student's possession at all times.
37. Computers and other electronic devices must be provided by the student.
38. Sound may be played at the time of the oral presentation ONLY. Volume must be limited so it does not interfere with other students' presentations.
39. Electrical outlets will NOT be provided for project displays. All electronic devices must be battery operated.
40. An internet connection may be used as part of a project display ONLY if the student provides a means of connecting (laptop air card or phone with cellular connectivity). At the State level competition, use of the Charleston Civic Center's internet connection (wireless or wired) will not be authorized under any circumstance.

VIII. Written Abstracts

41. Each project must have a written abstract in the approved format (see abstract template). A physical copy of the abstract must remain in the display area at all times.
42. Abstracts may be handwritten or typed.
43. Abstracts must be self-explanatory.
44. Points may be deducted for grammatical and spelling errors.

45. The abstract must include a complete bibliography in either APA or MLA format.

IX. Oral Presentation

46. All projects will include an oral presentation. Participants should notify fair officials IMMEDIATELY if they are denied the opportunity to deliver their complete oral presentation.
47. Oral presentations for individual projects must not exceed 5 minutes. Oral presentations for small group projects must not exceed 10 minutes in length. The question and answer period is not included in the oral presentation time limit.
48. Each student participant in a small group project must have a speaking part in the oral presentation.
49. Each student should be prepared to respond to questions from judges.
50. If a member of the small group has an acceptable excuse for being unable to attend, the other members of the group may represent the project.
51. Oral presentations may not be pre-recorded.

X. Judging and Awards

52. Each project at the state level competition will be assigned a judging time and project number. Project numbers will be posted to the State Social Studies Fair website at www.wvssfair.com at least one week prior to the fair date. Judging times will NOT be provided prior to the fair date. Requests for time changes or for specific judging times will NOT be honored.
53. First, second, and third place awards may be given to the three highest scoring projects in each Division/Category/Type that meet minimum score requirements. A project must score a minimum of 90 out of 100 points to be identified as a first place winner, 80 or above to be identified as a second place winner, and 70 or above to be identified as a third place winner. Because of the minimum score requirements, it is possible for a category to have no winning projects.
54. Honorable mention awards are granted upon the judges' recommendation and are not dependent upon the score. An honorable mention award is not considered a fourth place award. Judges are not required to award an honorable mention.
55. Ties for first, second or third place awards are not permitted at the school, county, regional or state level.
56. At the State Social Studies Fair, winning projects will be identified with a ribbon or sticker prior to the public viewing. Only those students whose projects are identified with a sticker or ribbon are required to remain for the awards ceremony. Students who are unable to attend the awards ceremony must identify someone to receive their award. Awards will NOT be mailed.
57. Access to the project display room is limited to fair officials, judges, and students during the scheduled judging period. Parents and teachers may not accompany students into the project display area during the scheduled judging period.
58. Projects may not be removed until after the public viewing. Students who are unable to retrieve their projects following the public viewing and awards ceremony must identify someone to do so. Anything left at the fair will be discarded at the conclusion of the event.
59. Projects that win first place at the state level will not be eligible to compete in school, county, regional or state fairs in subsequent years.
60. Issues or concerns about the judging process, particularly those issues related to oral presentations, must be addressed with the fair coordinator immediately. It is often impossible to resolve such matters after a category has closed and judges have been dismissed.
61. At the state level, student copies of score cards will be provided to county fair coordinators ONLY. State fair officials will not release score cards directly to students or parents.
62. Due to potential conflicts, immediate relatives (parents, grandparents, siblings, guardians, etc.) of fair participants are not eligible to serve as judges. Failure to disclose such a conflict to fair officials may result in disqualification of the project and may disqualify the judge from participating in future events.

63. Judges are prohibited from taking photographs of student participants and may only take photographs of project displays when no students are present in the project room.

XI. Nonpublic School and Homeschool Students

64. Nonpublic school and homeschool students may participate in the State Social Studies Fair under the guidelines established in this section.

65. Homeschool students must contact the public school they would attend and participate beginning at the school level.

66. Nonpublic school students may choose one of the following two options: (1) students may contact the public school they would attend to participate beginning at the school level; (2) Nonpublic schools may host their own school fair and send one project (best of show) from each division, as defined in the Project Classifications section of the fair rules and regulations, directly to the regional fair; or (3) Nonpublic schools may host their own school fair and send projects to the county fair **at the discretion of the county fair coordinator who determines local participation rules**. The nonpublic school may not send projects directly to the regional fair and projects to the county fair. Nonpublic schools must choose between regional or county competition. Only one option is permitted. If the nonpublic school hosts a school fair, the school fair must comply with all rules and regulations established for the West Virginia State Social Studies Fair.

XII. Prohibited Items

67. The following are prohibited at all levels of competition (school, county, regional, and state):

- a. Live animals;
- b. Flames, highly flammable materials, or sources of heat (hot plates, etc.);
- c. Dry ice;
- d. Weapons and ammunition (including toys and replicas);
- e. Sharp items (for example, syringes, needles, knives);
- f. Tobacco products;
- g. All hazardous substances or devices (for example—chemicals, poisons, and drugs);
- h. Batteries with open-top cells (for example—car and motorcycle batteries);
- i. Any item prohibited by county or WV Board of Education Policies; and
- j. Any item that the fair coordinator deems unsafe or inappropriate for public display.