

Beginners Guide to Documentation

Say what was done in period. Say what you did. Explain any differences.

Documentation is not everyone's favorite part of the Arts and Sciences. But it is important to be able to record what you did and show that you know why it was right or wrong. It is especially important for a competition. A judge can't read your mind to know that what you did was authentic. A judge often needs to be educated on the details of the specific category that you are entering. Good documentation is critical to a good experience for both the entrant and the judge.

Good Documentation Must Include:

- Country of origin
- Period of origin
 - If your craft could be found in multiple regions/time periods, state this but then give a specific time/country reference.
- Characteristics of style for that period
 - What materials, techniques and tools were used in period
 - Pictures/diagrams of period pieces, period recipes
- List materials/methods/techniques/tools you used to complete the project
- Explain differences between your materials/methods/techniques/tools/design and those used in period
- Sources for your research/information

Documentation Extras

- *Brief* history of the item, craft, technique or material being talked about.
- *Brief* discussion of how the item was used in period and/or how you intend to use it now.
- Anything that went wrong in your project.. perhaps some lessons learned for next time.
- Connect the dots for the judge!

Play to the Judges

The judges have to assign scores on specific qualities of your project and your documentation is used to know how to score it. Consider putting in a paragraph on the various scoring areas to help out a judge.

- Authenticity and Creativity - How is your piece authentic and where did you put in modern elements (design/materials/tools/etc) and why.
- Complexity – How is your entry complex. Were there multiple steps required? Are there multiple elements? Were any of the techniques especially difficult?
- Workmanship – While much of this score relies on the judge examining your piece, feel free to point out where you achieved your goals. What were you happy with? What needs more work?

Other Sound Advice

If you can't document your piece (i.e. if it was not meant to be an exact reproduction) then document the elements!

- And if something is an anachronism, admit it and explain why you did it.

If you do your documentation for a category right the first time, for other entries it only needs to be modified!

There is such a thing as too much documentation!

- Anything beyond 3 pages of text (not counting pictures, references) had better be very relevant, well organized and interesting. Often judges don't have time to read a dissertation.
- If you are writing a research paper then enter alone it as a research paper.
- Some projects take a lot of documenting because there may be many elements. Make sure to use a good format so that the judge can find the specific information that they are looking for.
- Stay focused. A brief discussion (a paragraph for instance) on history of a material may be an interesting side-note, but unless it is key knowledge for your entry, no more is needed.
- If you want to go into detail on aspects of your entry's history/creation/etc, put it in an appendix and refer to the appendix in your main body for more information.
- If your documentation is going to be fairly long, put a summary on the first page for lazy judges.

It doesn't matter what style you write it in (footnotes, MLA, fourth grade essay) so long as it is readable and accessible to your judge!

- I like to use an outline format. Separate product, process, materials into different sections and label the sections well.
- Braden likes to use footnotes. These are a good way to reference where your facts and theories come from.
- Lists (instead of written out sentences) can be helpful.

A picture is (often) worth 1000 words.

- Diagrams, pictures of surviving works, pictures of the item or craft in manuscripts. All of these enhance documentation.

Research before you Re-create!! (And remember where you found your research!)

Have someone proofread/practice judge your documentation.

Assume that your judge is not an expert in your area.

- Explain technical terms and other things you might consider a "given".
- If you are putting in very detailed descriptions that a learned judge wouldn't need, consider putting them in an appendix.

Bring 3 copies of your documentation to a competition!!! That way judges don't have to share.

Sources:

Primary Source: Usually letters, records or other documents created during the period that is being studied, such as diaries, legal notices or accounts. However, primary sources can include photographs, jewelry and other items.

- I SAW the chair in the museum and here are the pictures!
- Here is a picture of that manuscript page.
- Here is a copy of that recipe from the period source. (But the translation may well be secondary)

Secondary Source: Accounts of the past created by people who are not first-hand witnesses of the event. Secondary sources offer an analysis or a restatement of primary sources. Examples of secondary sources include: dictionaries, books and articles that interpret or review research works.

- 20,000 Years of Fashion references primary pictures but offers non-primary interpretations
- Someone's SCA class handout or research paper can fall here or in tertiary resources. Try any see where they got their research.

Tertiary Source: a publication such as an encyclopedia or other compendium that sums up other secondary sources and primary sources. Many introductory textbooks may also be considered tertiary to the extent they sum up widely accepted results of large amounts of primary and secondary sources. Some tertiary sources are more reliable than others, and within any given tertiary source, some articles may be more reliable than others.

- Wikipedia is not all evil. However, it is a tertiary source and not 100% reliable. Including it in your sources will not help you. Try instead to follow it to more direct sources.
- An encyclopedia entry that asserts facts without going into sources is not a great reference.
- Many SCA class handouts are in this category.
- If at all possible, try to replace tertiary sources with secondary ones or at least with ones that have more sources for the assertions that they make.

References:

There is no required format for listing sources. It is just important to get all of the information in there. This is the format that I like to use:

Book:

Author Last, First Name. Title/Subtitle of Book. City Published. Publisher. Year Published. ISBN.

Website:

Website Title. Website address

Article in Journal

Author Last, First Name. *Title/Subtitle of Article*. Name of Journal/Magazine. Issue/Volume of Magazine. Date Published. Page(s).

Online Paper

Author Last, First Name. *Title/Subtitle of Paper*. Date Posted. Website address.

Manuscripts

Manuscript Title. Institution Found At, Institution Location, Stack address.