

Marking and Labelling Methods and Positions

Some general rules:

- For composite objects choose the least porous surface;
- Number all of the parts if an object might be dismantled;
- If in doubt use a Tie-on label.

HARD NON-POROUS - glass, glazed pottery, metal

- Mark with a pigment based marker or pen, or acrylic paint, with an acrylic varnish layer over it. A varnish layer beneath is advised.

HARD POROUS - wood, terracotta, bone

- Mark with an acrylic varnish layer, then pigment based marker or pen, or acrylic paint, and an acrylic varnish layer over it.

PAINTED, VARNISHED WAX OR LACQUERED SURFACES AND PLASTICS

- Special care needed - they may be damaged by the materials used for numbering.

PAPER

- Mark with a pencil (B or HB).

Contact paper conservator for advice on photographs.

Archaeology

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Metals - wet	Select a position according to object.	Permanent ink on Tyvek label.
Wood - wet	Within polythene bag containing object.	Permanent ink on Tyvek label.
Sherds (ceramic)	Undecorated surface not on fracture break.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Wood - dry	Select a position according to object.	Permanent ink on Tyvek label.
Bone or ivory	Select a position according to object.	Permanent ink on Tie-on label.
Metals - dry	If very friable mark container.	Permanent ink on Tyvek label.

Art collections, frames, sculpture

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Frames for oil paintings, textiles, prints, drawings & watercolours	Gummed label attached to upper right corner of frame backboard overlapping gummed sealing tape if present. Loan labels may also be attached to backboard.	Carbon based ink on paper label.
Framed prints, drawings, watercolours	Mark the stretcher and the frame on the top left-hand corner at the back.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Framed oil paintings	Mark the stretcher and the frame on the top left-hand corner at the back.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Prints, drawings, watercolours, mounts	On reverse, lower left corner. Leave 5mm gap from left + lower edges. Only mark paper over a hard, clean surface. Do not press hard, especially with soft paper. Don't turn items over if pigments damaged or friable, especially gouache and pastel.	HB or B graphite pencil.
Sculpture, especially stone	Base or back.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Stone sculpture	Base, avoiding foot (reverse side if base inaccessible).	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Oil paintings Unframed	On stretcher. Unframed panels are left unmarked.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67, and OR glue-on label.
Miniatures	Upper right corner of backboard if present. Avoid overlapping frame seal. If no clear, separate backboard attach to storage enclosure/envelope only.	Carbon based ink or graphite on small photographic quality gummed paper label.

Bird and mammal specimens

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Bird and mammal specimens (mounted)	Underside of base for mounted specimens, otherwise on a label attached to the horns, antlers or legs by thread.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 OR Tie-on label.
Bird eggs	Label in tray.	Tie-on label.
Bird skins	Label attached to dowel support and feet or to feet if no dowel support.	Pencil or ink on acid free card or Tyvek.
Fluid-preserved specimens	Inside container, against glass so they can be read from outside, or self-adhesive label stuck on outside.	Graphite pencil or carbon based ink only on conservation quality paper.
Mammal skins Flat-mounted	On the card which supports the skins.	Carbon based ink.
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Basketry

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Basketry	Around handle or loop through basketry if weave is open enough, otherwise write on inside edge or base.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 OR Tie-on label.

Bone and ivory

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Bone and ivory specimens and artefacts (sound)	On flat surface, under base or on back.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Ivory artefacts and specimens (with good surface)	On flat surface, under base or on back.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 and/OR Tie-on label.

Botanical collections: open

Object Type	Where and how to mark
Timbers	Printed labels attached direct to upper side.
Plant models	Original manufacturer's labels adhered to upper side of base.
Library	Metal backed computer generated self- adhesive labels *applied on base of spine, pencil annotation inside front cover.

Botanical collections: boxed specimens

Object Type	Where and how to mark
Economic specimens	Self adhesive labels *, outside of box, usually underside.
Lichens	Labels on acid free paper *, adhered with SCMC.
Macro fungi	Labels on acid free paper *, + pencilled tie-on tag round stem for freeze-drying.
Carpological (seeds)	Labels on acid free paper, adhered with SCMC to outside of box.
Exsiccate	Volumes placed within archive boxes, box spines labelled.
Prints & drawings	See 'Art collections, frames, sculpture' table.
Archives	Marked with pencil - see Archives, (single sheets) and Books.

Ceramics and clay pipes

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Ceramic vessels and ornaments	Base, avoiding foot (reverse side if base inaccessible).	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Clay pipes	Bowl bottom or, if broken, on pipe stem as well.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.

Coins and medals

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Coins and medals	Use a loose label	<p>Write the object number on an acid-free paper or Tyvek label using a suitable drawing ink and drawing pen. Put it underneath the object in its storage tray.</p> <p>Take a photograph of the object, and mark the object number on the rear border of the print using a suitable drawing ink and drawing pen (record the weight of the object as an additional means of identification).</p> <p>Always keep the label with the object. When the object (and hence label) is moved, a proxy card should be put in its place.</p>

Furniture, wood, mirrors

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Longcase clocks	Trunk, hinge jamb near top, inside door in same position. Hood, on mask on hinge side near top (hidden when door closed), inside door in same position.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Bracket/pediment clocks	Back, top right corner.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Free standing clocks	Clocks with feet, inside right back foot as long as it can be seen without lifting clock. If not on back, near base, right.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Tables, cabinets, commodes	Back at top right corner (upper section, if present, back, lower right corner).	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Chairs	Back seat rail, centre of inside face.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Drop-in seats	Back rail, centre of front face.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Drawers	Back, outside face of backboard, right.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Lids	Jamb or lip, inside, right.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Mirrors	If freestanding, reverse side; side of mount if wall-mounted.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Wooden objects, miscellaneous	Mark unpainted wood, underside, back or inside edge.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Boxes	Small: On base, right back corner. Large: Hinge jamb of lid and body, right corner.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.

Glass, metal and jewellery

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Glass and enamels	Lower back or under the foot.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Stained glass	Mark as glass and enamels, on glass rather than leading.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Glass, crizzled (for miniatures and cased photographs (Consult a conservator asap)	A small sound area, or mark container. Avoid consolidating glass.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Metal vessels and sculpture	Base or back.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Silver & base metal collections	As metal vessels and sculpture, ie base or back.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 and/OR tie-on label.
Jewellery, precious, not plastic	Edge or verso. Alternatively box or container, or tie-on label.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.

Leather

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Leather objects with smooth firm surface (not books)	Underside or back.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Leather, soft suede or napped, and un-tanned or semi-tanned skin	Loop through existing hole or mark container/packaging.	Tie-on acid free card or Tyvek label, permanent ink.

Minerals and fossils

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Minerals, rocks and fossils	Matrix (or the 'poorest side' of specimens without matrix).	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 Perm ink on acid free paper secured with Paraloid B72 or painted no on outside of tube or plastic container.
Crystals	With number on label inside glass tube, painted number on outside of glass tube or plastic box, or label on specimen matrix or base.	Carbon based ink on acid free paper secured to matrix/base with Paraloid B72.
Sub fossil bone/shells	On underside or matrix Or painted no. on outside of tube or plastic container.	Acid free paper label perm ink, secured with starch paste.

Musical instruments, toys and dolls

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Musical instruments	On back of case or frame, underside of object, bare metal part if possible.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 AND tie-on label.
Toys and dolls	Back of shoulder plate/back of doll: underside/back of toy. Mark clothes as for costume.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 and Tie-on label, or sewn on label if appropriate.

Paper, photographs and books

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Archives – single sheets, ephemera	Reverse, lower left corner.	HB or B graphite pencil.
Books, albums, sketchbooks	Lower corner on inside of each cover; if decorated, on first plain page. Use book supports where possible, avoid pressure on joints.	HB or B graphite pencil only.
Photographs (all types: prints, negatives, glass slides)	Mark enclosure (without photo inside/underneath) rather than photo. If framed, see Frames in 'Art collections, frames, sculpture'. If small cased photographs, see Miniatures in 'Art collections, frames, sculpture'.	Method depends on nature of enclosure. Consult a paper or photograph conservator if in doubt.
Glass, crizzled (for miniatures and cased photographs (Consult a conservator asap)	A small sound area, or mark container. Avoid consolidating glass.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.

Plastic, wax and lacquer

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Plastic objects (not photographs)	Under base, or back, depending on object.	Tie-on label or soft pencil. DO NOT USE Paraloid, ink or paint.
Wax objects	Depends on object.	Use Tie-on label or mark container DO NOT USE Paraloid solutions as they will dissolve the wax.
Lacquer, Oriental and European	Mark only on un-lacquered surface, or use Tie-on label.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.

Shells and insects

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Shells, conchology collections	Label in tray.	Tie-on label.
Insect collections	On card, mounted on the pin.	Pencil or ink.

Textiles and other costume

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Costume	Back of neckband or waistband, near the opening.	Sewn-on label and/OR Tie-on label.
Shoes	On the sole, under the instep.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 OR tie-on label.
Bags and purses	Inside, near the opening.	Sewn-on label and/OR Tie-on label.
Gloves and stockings	Inside the welt or cuff.	Sewn-on label.
Curtains, tapestries, banners and draperies	If hanging: On reverse side, usually lower right hand corner. If rolled add labels which can be seen without unrolling.	Sewn-on label, 25mm width for larger textiles.
Rugs, tapestries and carpets	Reverse side, on two diagonally opposite corners if large.	Sewn-on label, 25 mm width if large.
Textile fragments	Loop through existing hole, on folder or box for very fragile pieces.	Tyvek label on fine loop of thread, pencil on card, or marker pen on box.
Textiles and embroideries	On the reverse at the corner.	Sewn-on label and/OR Tie-on label.

Tools, machinery, vehicles, boats

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Tools	Near the handle junction, on metal part if there is one.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Ship models	Discretely, or on crate or case.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Ships and boats	Bow, bottom of stem.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 OR Paint.
Machinery and equipment	Right hand side, low down.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 OR Paint OR tie-on label.
Land Transport, vehicles	Inside driver-side door/right hand side.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 OR Paint.

Weapons, armour and powder horns

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Edged weapons (swords and bayonets)	Blade, below hilt and ricasso. Scabbard, back of top mount.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Long arms and handguns (rifles, muskets, pistols, revolvers)	Preferably on trigger guard mount, or other metal part rather than wood.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Ordnance	On base on bare metal.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Pole weapons (halberds, lances, pikes, clubs, maces, spears)	Preferably on bare metal.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Armour, helmets	Inside rim if bare metal, or tie-on label.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.
Powder horns and flasks	Back edge near opening, or under base.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.