**Panel and Label Writing**

**H.E.N**

**Stockwood Discovery Centre**

Guide to writing panels and labels

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**What do you want to say?**

Panels or labels for

* Object information
* Health and safety
* Directions
* Donations
* Opening times, admission charges
* Emergencies

**Warnings & Notices**

* + Allergies
  + Choking hazards
  + Photography – allowed or not
  + Acknowledgements – sponsors, lenders
  + Copyright information – rights given by others
  + Loan information – be careful about giving too much information about the lender or donor – They should give permission as it is covered by the Data Protection Act

**Interpretation development – panels or labels for objects**

**Interpretation – what we write or illustrate to tell stories or give information**

Before you begin ……ask

Where is it needed?

* Inside or outside
* How much room do I have??
* How long does it need to last?
* How much time do I have?
* How much budget do I have?
* Who is going to read it?

**Example – Stockwood Discovery Centre**

**Inside - Permanent Gallery**

**Size – first gallery space Discovery Hall**

**Lasts – 10 years**

**Time – 8 months**

**Budget - £40,000 (all interactives, graphics, cases etc)**

**Audience – general family**

**Content – has to be able to include carriages**

**A. Determine Overall Gallery Theme**

**Life’s Journey**

Life’s Journey is an exploration of the path that we all travel. This gallery celebrates the different stages of the journey and shares with you stories and memories of the moments that make it memorable.

**Develop narrative - determine sections in the gallery**

Birth; Childhood & Education; Weddings; Work; Holidays; Health; Social Status; Death

**Determine physical structure, based on objects we have to use**

1 main panel in each section

Object labels – individual objects and group objects (where cases are small)

**Select objects to match the narrative**

The objects story – reflecting cultural, social, economic, political events that shape history and the people connected with them.

**What to say - Questions to ask**

Who is it for?

What do you really want to say?

What do I not want to say?

Do I need a label – is it mentioned somewhere else?

How else can I convey information?

Got too much information - what can I do?

What is the one thing I want people to know about this object?

**Panel text guidelines**

Use hierarchy of text:

* Use layered interpretation
* Format to be decided by group who might decide on, for example:
  + Bold header
  + Bold first paragraph – to give précis of panel contents -
  + Main body text to give more detailed information
  + Captions can provide additional information
  + Leave a space between paragraphs.
  + Make conscious use of different tones of voice if appropriate



Panel Word count to aim for:

* 150-175 words in main text on panel
* 50 words maximum caption text
* there may be exceptions – fewer words is usually better.

Label Word count to aim for:

* 50 – 70 maximum words text
* there may be exceptions – however fewer words is usually better than more.
* Think about where your label is going. This will also affect the number of words you can use.

Reading age:

* Be aware of reading age, eg.
  + General age 11 yrs old for panels
* Be aware of target audience for publicity & marketing literature
* Be consistent in layout (this is very important to aid people with visual disabilities, or learning disabilities).

Language:

* Active rather than passive
* Use clear and accessible language
* Plain English
* Avoid jargon



Dates:

* Dates consistent across all panels.
* Use numbers eg. 1880s not 19th century
* Use date ranges 1850s-1900 not 2nd half 19th century.
* Exception is 20th century.
* Seek advice of archaeologist on very early dates, periods.
* Avoid only referring to period by name, give approximate dates eg if writing about the Bronze Age, give rough date range.

Font size & Typeface & style:

* As a general rule, be guided by typefaces such as Arial, Universe and. These are all good examples of clear and legible typefaces. (Luton Life galleries used Universe).
* Avoid simulated handwriting or ornate typefaces.
* Use sans serif, eg. E (sans serif Arial), NOT E –(serif (Times New Roman, little lines at end of letter)
* Capital letters & italicised text harder to read.
* Avoid use of capitals for continuous text.
* Numbers, use typeface where numbers clear, people with sight problems can easily misread 3, 5, 8 and 0.
* Don’t put full stops after title.
* Use as little punctuation as possible, still consistent with meaning.
* 64 point titles
* 52 point main text
* 28 point secondary text
* 20 point captions
* sans serif point style
* Layout consistent across all panels
* Clearly defined areas of colour, same information in same place on each panel (following recommendation and request of Access Advisory group).

Contrast:

* The better the contrast between the background and the text, the more legible the text will be.
* Contrast will be affected by size and weight of type.
* Black text on white background provides best contrast
* If using white type, make sure the background colour is dark enough to provide sufficient contrast.

Setting text:

* Avoid fitting text around images if this means that lines of text start in a different place and are therefore difficult to find.
* Don’t put text over images
* Don’t justify paragraphs
* Try to avoid a line of text running onto the next page, or splitting a paragraph over two pages.

Style:

* Use the same format for each type of label or panel
* Use logos where needed – Funders, donors
* Use complementary colours



**Museums Luton - proofreading conventions**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Use…** | **Rather than…** |
| ,about 1840 | c.1840, circa 1840, around 1840 |
| One to ten in words, then 11 upwards using numbers |  |
| In the 1800s | In the nineteenth century, in the C19th  The exception is the 20th century |
| In the 1860s | In the 1860’s |
| 1850s - 1900. | second half of the 19th century |
| Medieval | Mediaeval |
| Lent by Mrs Jones | On loan from Mrs Jones |
| By kind permission of the British Library (unless the owner specifies exactly which words to use) | Photograph by kind permission of the British Library |
| Dates as well as historical periods, eg if writing about the Bronze Age, give rough date range as well. |  |
| Write out numbers from one to ten. From 11 upwards use the numbers |  |
| 50cm (20 inches) |  |
| 6,000 | 6000 |
| 750 AD  750 BC  but drop the AD after 1,000 AD (eg in 1066) | 750AD, AD 750  750BC |
| 3 March 1993 | 3rd March, 1993 |
| 70 per cent | 70% |
| ageing | aging |
| Anglo-Saxon | Anglo Saxon |
| Beaker Folk | beaker folk |
| brick making | brick-making |
| bumble-bee | bumblebee, bumble bee |
| Celtic | Celtic |
| Cretaceous Period, Eocene Period etc for prehistory periods | Cretaceous period etc |
| Danelaw | danelaw, Dane Law or dane law |
| Devil’s Pit | Devils Pit |
| Dunstable Priory | Dunstable Friary |
| environmentally-friendly | environmentally friendly |
| fertiliser | fertilizer |
| field walking | fieldwalking |
| focused | focussed |
| forward-thinking | forward thinking |
| Governess Cart (use upper case for all proper names of horse-drawn vehicles) | governess cart |
| hand axe | handaxe or hand-axe |
| handmade | hand-made, hand made |
| Hansom Cab (use upper case for all proper names of horse-drawn vehicles) | hansom cab |
| honey bee | honey-bee, honeybee |
| horse-drawn | horse drawn |
| horsepower | horse-power, horse power |
| hunter-gatherers | hunter gatherers |
| Justices of the Peace | justices of the peace |
| lacemaking | lace making, lace-making |
| lorries | trucks |
| make-up (as in face make-up) | make up |
| magistrate | Magistrate – when referring to Crawley Family |
| medieval period | Medieval Period |
| Members of Parliament | members of Parliament |
| Mr Green, Mrs Green, Ms Green, Dr Green, Joe Green Jnr, Joe Green Snr | Mr. Green, Mrs. Green, Ms. Green, Dr. Green, Joe Green Junior, Joe Green Senior |
| North west | North-west |
| Postman | Post man |
| Postboy | Post boy |
| Puddlehill | Puddle hill |
| rakemaker | rake-maker |
| Samian ware | Samianware |
| Second World War | 2nd World War, II World War |
| stable block | stableblock |
| Totternhoe Roman villa | Totternhoe Roman Villa |
| trackway | track way |
| waterlogged | water-logged |
| watertight | water-tight |
| Waulud’s Bank  Dray’s Ditches  Bradger’s Hill | Wauluds Bank  Drays Ditches  Bradgers Hill |
| weathercock | weather cock |
| Well-known | Well known |
| woodturning | wood-turning |

**Making your own labels**

**Materials**

* Foam core
* Mount card
* Paper - printed or photocopy
* Scalpel
* Double sided tape or spray glue

Laminate or not

* inside only
* consider how it will be attached

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**Using a print company**

* What material?
  + Foamex
  + Banners
  + Fabric
  + Vinyl
* Can they print from your software layout?
* Need to determine size for all labels
* Get a quote
* Obtain a sample to check quality
* Check that all spelling is correct
* How will you send graphics?
* Make sure they understand your instructions
* Make sure all images are high enough resolution to print out at the size you require – think 3mb per image minimum
* Will they cut them out for you?
* How will you stand them?
* How long will it take?
* How will they be delivered?



**Installation**

Do you install at the same time as objects?

What do you use?

* Stands
* Double sided tape
* Cable ties
* Frames

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**Stand suppliers**

3D Displays

www.3ddisplays.co.uk

Dauphin

www.dauphin.co.uk

Sign Holders Direct

www.signholdersdirect.co.uk

Morplan

www.morplan.com