



RULES AND REGULATIONS 2025-26

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.