



RULES AND REGULATIONS 2026-27

Glossary of Terms

Abstract: A written summary of the project, including the research question, methods, findings, conclusions, and bibliography.

Digital display: A project display or presentation using an electronic device, such as a phone, laptop, **tablet**, or similar device.

Fair coordinator: The person responsible for administering a fair at the school, county, regional, or state level.

Fair director: The official responsible for enforcing fair rules and making determinations at a particular fair.

Guide: To provide advice, feedback, or direction without preparing the project or conducting the research for the student.

One business day: The next day on which the applicable school or office is open for regular business.

Small group: Two to five students who work together on a project.

I. Levels of Authority

1. The fair coordinator (school, county, regional, or state) at the applicable level has decision-making authority for all matters not explicitly outlined in these rules and 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, or state level must be submitted by email to the fair coordinator responsible for that level within one business day following the fair so that the challenge is documented in writing. Once the official results have been finalized on fair day, the fair director will modify or overrule a judge's decision only in the event of an obvious mathematical error in the scoring process.

4. The fair coordinator at each level of competition has sole and final authority to resolve issues, concerns, conflicts, or disputes arising at that level. Coordinators at other levels will not intervene.

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 seek guidance from teachers, coordinators, and other adults, but students must prepare the project and conduct the research themselves. Adults may guide students by offering advice, feedback, or direction, but may not complete the student’s work. **See Section VII, Academic Integrity and AI.**
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. The fair director may disqualify a project for plagiarism, duplication of another student’s work, or other egregious violations of generally accepted academic integrity standards. See Section VII, Academic Integrity and AI.

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:

- a) The substitution is made BEFORE the regional fair coordinator submits project information to the State Social Studies Fair; AND
- b) 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, and World History.

**America 250 will serve as the special category topic for SY 2026-2027.*

24. Types: Individual, in which one student completes the project and delivers the oral presentation; and Small Group, in which two to five students complete the project and deliver the oral presentation together. Counties may offer individual projects only or both individual and small group projects.

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. The classification of a project may not be changed after entry. Teachers should guide students in selecting the correct division, category, and type before registration. If a classification is questioned before entry, the applicable fair coordinator will make the final determination.

VI. Project Displays

28. Each project must include a physical display. The display may use traditional materials, a digital display, or a combination of both. A digital display uses an electronic device such as a phone, laptop, tablet, or similar device. See Section VIII, Electronic Devices.

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. Items in the storage area may be used during the project presentation, but props may not block or substantially obstruct an aisle.

32. Items may hang from the front of the table (tablecloths, charts, etc.).

33. 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 always remain in the student's possession. Judges will allow students to return these items to the project display immediately prior to the oral presentation.

34. Food is prohibited. Food-related content may be displayed only through packaged materials, such as empty food packaging, or through photographs or videos of food.

VII. Academic Integrity and Use of Artificial Intelligence

35. Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. The following violations may result in disqualification:

- a) **Plagiarism:** Presenting the words, ideas, or analysis of another person as one's own without proper attribution.
- b) **Duplication:** Submitting a project that is substantially identical to the work of another student.
- c) **Misrepresentation of AI-generated content:** Submitting text, analysis, images, or conclusions generated primarily by an artificial intelligence tool without disclosure.

36. Requirements for the use of artificial intelligence tools:

- a) AI tools may not generate the student's analysis, conclusions, or written abstract.
- b) Any use of AI tools must be disclosed in the abstract's bibliography or methodology section.
- c) Judges may ask students to explain their research process. Inability to do so may be considered evidence of misrepresentation.

Note: These rules reflect evolving standards around academic integrity. The fair coordinator may update guidance as needed. When in doubt, students should disclose any tool or assistance used.

VIII. Electronic Devices

37. 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.

38. **Student responsibilities:** Students must provide all computers and electronic devices; ensure that devices are battery operated because electrical outlets will not be provided; provide their own internet connection when connectivity is needed because wireless or wired internet access will not be provided; keep electronic devices in their possession when they are not being used; and limit sound to the oral presentation at a volume that does not interfere with other students.

IX. Written Abstracts

39. Each project must have a written abstract in the approved format (see abstract template). A physical copy of the abstract must always remain in the display area.

40. Abstracts may be handwritten or typed in Division I (Grades 3–5), although every effort should be made to type them when possible. Abstracts must be typed in Division II (Grades 6–8) and Division III (Grades 9–12).

41. Abstracts must be self-explanatory.

42. Points may be deducted for grammatical and spelling errors.

43. The abstract must include a complete bibliography in APA, MLA, or Chicago style.

X. Oral Presentation

44. 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.

45. 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.

46. Each student participant in a small group project must have a speaking part in the oral presentation.

47. Each student should be prepared to respond to questions from judges.

48. It is recommended that all small group members participate. However, at least one member of the small group must be present for the project to be judged.

49. Oral presentations may not be prerecorded. Video clips featuring the individual student or group are acceptable when incorporated into a prerecorded digital display as one component of the presentation.

XI. Judging and Awards

50. 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.

51. 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.

52. 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.

53. Ties for first, second or third place awards are not permitted at the school, county, regional or state level.

54. 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.

55. 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.

56. 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.

57. 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.

58. 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.

59. 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.

60. 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.

61. Photographs of projects are prohibited until the public viewing period and may be taken only with parent or guardian permission.

XII. Nonpublic School, Homeschool, and Microschool Students

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

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

64. Nonpublic school students may choose one of the following options:

- a) Students may contact the public school they would attend to participate beginning at the school level;
- b) 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
- c) 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.

65. Microschool students must contact the public school they would attend to participate beginning at the school level.

XIII. Prohibited Items

66. 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 that are life size or appear realistic. Small plastic toy soldiers are exempt;
- e) Sharp items (for example, syringes, needles, knives);
- f) Tobacco products, alcohol, and other illegal substances;
- 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;
- j) Any item that the fair coordinator deems unsafe or inappropriate for public display;
- k) Drones; and
- l) Food. Empty food packaging and photographs or videos of food are permitted under Rule 34.