



1999 4-H Judges Training

Appearance & Design in Exhibit Evaluation

When you are evaluating 4-H science, mechanics, and engineering exhibits, concentrate on three major criteria: general appearance and design; workmanship and construction; and the evidence that the 4-H'er learned something as he or she planned and prepared the exhibit.

Of the three, general appearance and design can be the most difficult to evaluate. You can be more effective as judges when you express your comments in the "language" of design.

One definition of design is a plan for doing something for a specific purpose. Further, design has two parts: visual and functional. Visual design is the exhibit's appearance and its functional design is how well it serves its intended purpose.

As a judge, you must decide to what extent visual and functional design are important to the exhibit and comment accordingly. Your comments about appearance and visual design should evaluate the exhibitor's use of design elements and principles.

The design elements include line, shape, color, texture, and space. Design principles are rhythm, proportion, emphasis, balance, and unity. Design principles serve as guidelines to help us understand why some combinations of the design elements work better together than others.

Design Elements

Line can be horizontal, vertical, diagonal, or curved. Lines can show direction, outline an object, divide a space.

Shapes are made from connected lines. How they are arranged determines the design.

Color is described by the words hue, value, and intensity. Color helps define parts of objects and set off one area of a design from another.

Texture refers to the surface characteristic that can be touched or seen – its smoothness or roughness.

Space is the area which an object or design occupies. Space is divided into negative and positive areas. Negative space is background or unused space.

Art Principles

Rhythm is organized movement. Variation and repetition in lines, shapes, or colors keeps your eyes moving and helps create rhythm.

Proportion refers to the relationship of size, amount, or number among the elements. Unequal proportions in which one element dominates is desirable.

Emphasis is the center of attention. It captures your attention by unusual use of line, shape, texture, space, or value.

Balance gives a feeling of stability to a design. Three types of balance may be used – formal, informal, and radial balance.

Radial balance same around a center point, like spokes on a wheel.

Formal balance when one side of something is the same as the other side.

Informal balance when the emphasis is to the right or left of center or dissimilar on both sides.

Unity is the union of the elements in a design. All of the elements are working together according to the design principles to create the feeling that you want.

Good luck as you begin to evaluate general appearance and design. Design is not something you learn overnight. Instead, design is something that you continue to grow and improve in year after year.