

Tips for County Fair Judges

Wisconsin 4-H recommends that you use the following criteria to judge arts and crafts entries at county fairs.

1. Background
 - a. Why did this person make this piece? Judge every piece within the context of this information. The exhibitor and/or the cards attached to the item will provide some information.
 - b. Artist's interests and experience
 - c. Age
 - d. Interests
 - e. Experience
 - f. Physical/intellectual challenges
 - g. Degree of supervision needed, evident or likely
2. Artist's goals
 - a. What is the artist trying to do? Examples include: Explore the material. Express something seen or felt. Construct a form. Use a specific technique. Tryout or explore a design concept. Practice or perfect a skill.
 - b. The goals require levels of response. They may require a simple task, such as following specific directions. It may require a complex combination of thought, personal expression, and skill, such as figuring out the design and construction of a unique item in a new medium.
3. Artistic idea or creative process
 - a. Is the idea imaginative, unique or original? Are the materials used in a unique manner? Has the idea been borrowed but used in a unique way? Are the sources of copies acknowledged? Is the use of copied material understandable within the overall original work?
 - b. Does the total object make a single, unified statement? Do all parts add support to the whole?
 - c. How complex are the ideas and problems exhibited?
 - d. Is this piece exploratory? Has the artist experienced and solved a variety of problems in construction, design and expression?
4. Craftsmanship
 - a. Does the piece show an awareness and conscious use of the elements and principles of design? For example:
 - Variety of line quality
 - Repetition and variation of shapes
 - Balance without monotony
 - Proportions appropriate to the whole
 - Space consciously and expressively used
 - Texture in variation and repetition
 - Range of value
 - Color harmony
 - b. Is the object suitable for the purpose intended? (Is it utilitarian, such as a vase? Does it contain aesthetic appeal, such as a vase or painting? Is it durable, such as a leather belt or piñata?)
 - c. Does the artist show technical knowledge and skill?
 - d. Does the artist clearly indicate what was done with assistance?
 - e. Does the object show the individual's uniqueness or style?
 - f. Is it presented appropriately (matting, framing, base, etc.)?
5. Other considerations
 - a. What more could the artist have done or could s/he do in the future?
 - b. How does this person's piece compare with other work (their own, other's work in the exhibit, or the stated criteria of the exhibit)?
 - c. If an exhibitor submits several objects, look for variety in the types of problems solved, growth in complexity and ease in handling the media/techniques.