

The Title Page - telling everyone about your exhibit By Sheryll Ruecker and Tony Wawrukiewicz

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Exciting times lie ahead! You have decided to enter your exhibit in the upcoming stamp show and you can't wait for everyone to see it. Even your neighbors have said they are coming! Will they understand what you are going to show, you wonder. It may all depend on your **title page**.

Note: The advice given in this article represents the opinions of the authors as of the above date, and is also in line with the description of the title page in the 7th edition of the American Philatelic Society's (APS') Manual of Judging and Exhibiting. It may change over time as new and valuable insights come to light.

In our opinion, here are the 6 elements that should be present on a good title page:

1. This may be the hardest thing to do, but it is important. Come up with an unambiguous **title** that includes the boundaries of your topic so that the judges and viewers know exactly what they can expect to see. You may need to add a **subtitle** to help define the exhibit.

2. The very first thing you need to write is a succinct statement of **purpose**. Then specify what **type** of exhibit you are showing (traditional, postal history, thematic, etc). After that, explain the **scope** of the exhibit - where you draw the line between what you plan to show and what will not be covered. Arbitrary limitations, such as not showing early material which rightly begins your story, or leaving out a pivotal item which completes your story, are not appropriate.

If you have got the **statement of purpose** right, you will be able to put it on the entry form as your exhibit description for the show's program.

3. The **plan** or **outline** for your exhibit is essential for helping viewers find their way from the beginning to the end. It tells them how you have organized it. Your neighbors should be able to follow it, just as easily as the judges. You can then use the headings from the plan as your story chapter headings and even subheadings.

If you are making a thematic exhibit, the plan is doubly important and may take up more than one page.

4. You may find that you need to add a short paragraph of **background information** or **historical context** to set the scene, but only if you feel it necessary for the viewer to understand the story better. If you find yourself going on and on here, then put this information in the **synopsis** (see the other article on this website) instead.

5. If you have space available after you have done everything above, display an **item** (not necessarily philatelic) that sets the stage for the story, provides a visual representation of your topic or begins the story. This is another way to get your message across.

6. Let the viewers know your method for **highlighting** items that are rare or hard to find. These are the significant items you will be referring to in your synopsis. The judges will be looking for them, so make them easy to find. Here are some currently accepted ideas:

- boxes (thicker, double-lined or colored lines around your highlighted items if you have drawn boxes around all your material)
- dots or diamonds (possibly colored)
- matting (possibly in a stronger color around the highlighted items, even double matting, if your whole exhibit is matted)

Try using colors which match the colors of the material in your exhibit for a striking yet elegant effect.

Take time to read the APS Judging and Exhibiting Manual. It will explain these 6 elements in more detail in easy to understand language.

Keep in mind that the title page is the most important page of your exhibit. It needs to be the **first** page you make and the **last** to be edited, as that is where you are defining your exhibit.