The Judging Process and Criteria

Evaluating history is a subjective process, but National History Day has established criteria and methods to achieve fair decisions. All decisions are made by the consensus of the judging teams. In effect, History Day judging is a jury process, where the judges have to reach a shared conclusion, rather than a point system. Judges take into consideration both the project itself and the annotated bibliography when evaluating a project. **If a project does not have an annotated bibliography, they are unable to advance to the Final-Round of competition.**

Historical Quality (80%): Historical Quality assesses the project's research, analysis, interpretation of the topic, and relationship to the theme. There are eight criteria, each carrying equal weight, and are the same for all categories.
- **Historical Argument:** The use of analysis and evidence to support the historical argument
- **Theme:** The clarity and connection of the topic to the theme in the project
- **Wide Research:** The use of a variety of types of primary and secondary sources
- **Primary Sources:** The support that primary sources give the argument. They may include, but are not limited to first-hand accounts of the topic such as letters, speeches, diaries, contemporary newspaper articles, oral history interviews, documents, photographs, and artifacts.
- **Historical Context:** The relevant connections the student makes to the topic's time and place
- **Multiple Perspectives:** The integration of different perspectives into the project
- **Historical Accuracy:** The accuracy, credibility and lack of critical omissions in historical information
- **Significance in History:** The analysis of the impact of the topic in history

Clarity of Presentation (20%): Although historical quality is most important, the entry must be presented in an effective manner. It is important to remember that the NHD criteria specify *clarity* of presentation, which does not necessarily mean a flashy presentation. Judges will be careful to look beyond glitz in projects for organization, neatness, etc. You can find the category-specific clarity of presentation criteria on the [rubric](#).

Rule Compliance
Judges will take any rule infraction into consideration in their final rankings. Minor rule infractions will *not* disqualify an entry, but rule infractions that give students an unfair advantage will be taken into consideration in determining a project's final ranking. Take close look at the "Rules for All Categories" and the "Individual Category Rules" in the *National History Day Contest Rule Book* for specific rules for each category.

Disqualification
Tampering with another entry, plagiarism, entering a project in multiple categories, and revising or reusing an entry from a previous year – whether your own or another student's – is unacceptable and will result in disqualification.

Selecting Finalists
After finishing the First-Round, judges will meet to discuss the entries they have reviewed. Performance, Documentary, Website, and Exhibit judges will select the top three entries in their First-Round judging group. These entries will then become part of a Final-Round judging process in the afternoon. Research Papers and Podcasts have already gone through preliminary judging. Paper and Podcast judges will determine the top five award-winners after interviews are complete.

Final-Round Judging
The Exhibit, Performance, Website, and Documentary categories will have a Final-Round of judging at State. A new set of judges will view the Final-Round entries and select award winners. A list of projects that have advanced to the Final-Round of judging will be posted online at mn.nhd.org and on social media (@MNHistoryDay) at the times listed below.

- **Exhibit and Website:** Students are NOT present for the Final-Round of judging. Exhibit and Website rooms are closed to the public during final judging. Exhibit students should double-check that at least two copies of their process paper and bibliography are in front of their Exhibit before the room closes.
- **Performance and Documentary:** Students with Performance and Documentary entries will present their entries in the Final-Round, but will not be interviewed by judges. Performance and Documentary students selected for the Final-Round of judging should have two copies of their process paper and bibliography ready for this round of judging. Performance and Documentary rooms are open to the public during Final-Round judging.

Category	Estimated Posting Time	Final-Round Judging Begins	Are students Present for the Final-Round?
Documentary	1:30 pm	2 pm	Yes
Performance	1:30 pm	2 pm	Yes
Exhibit	1:30 pm	2 pm	No
Website	1:30 pm	2 pm	No

Advancing to Final-Round

The Final-Round judging process is shaped by the number of entries in each category. As of the printing of this guide, below is the expected process for Final-Round in each category.
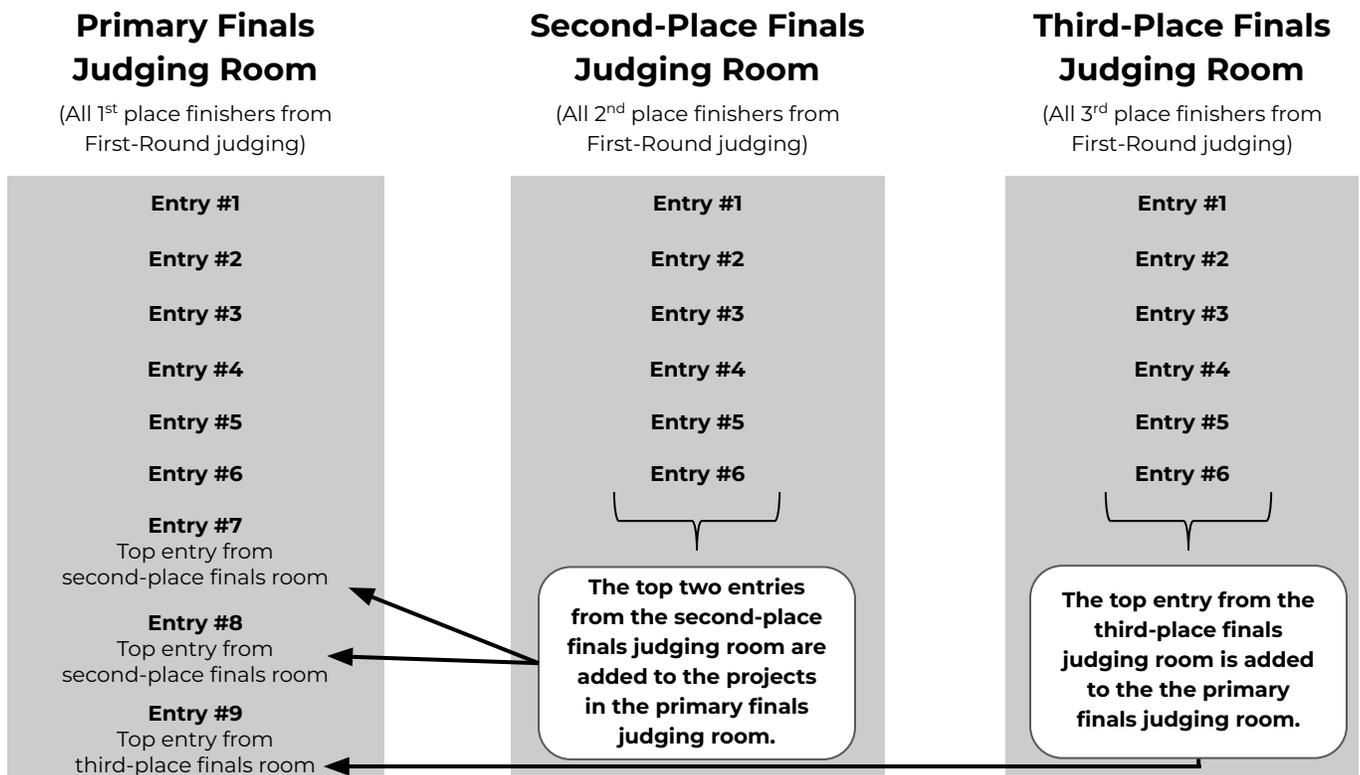
Senior Documentaries and Senior Performances: Senior Documentaries and Senior Performances will have three First-Round judging teams in each category. The top three entries from each First-Round room advance to a single Final-Round room. These judges will view all of the finalists and select winners.

All Exhibits, All Websites, Junior Documentaries, and Junior Performances: There will be at least four First-Round judging teams in each of these categories.

- The **top entry** in each First-Round room will advance to the primary finals judging room.

- The **second-place entry** in each First-Round judging room will advance to the second-place finals judging room. After evaluating these presentations the judges will select the top two entries in the second-place finals judging room to <u>immediately</u> advance to the primary finals judging room.

- The **third-place entries** in each First-Round judging room will advance to the third-place finals judging room. After evaluating these presentations the judges will select the top entry in the third-place finals judging room to <u>immediately</u> advance to the primary finals judging room.

Performances and Documentaries: Pay Attention!

In Junior Performance and Junior Documentary categories, the top entries in the second-place and third-place finals judging rooms will be required to present for a _third_ time. The judges who make this decision will announce the entry that is moving on shortly after the final presentation in the second- and third-place finals rooms. Students should stay nearby to make sure that they do not miss this announcement. See the diagram below.

Primary Finals Judging Room	Second-Place Finals Judging Room	Third-Place Finals Judging Room
(All 1st place finishers from First-Round judging)	(All 2nd place finishers from First-Round judging)	(All 3rd place finishers from First-Round judging)
Entry #1	**Entry #1**	**Entry #1**
Entry #2	**Entry #2**	**Entry #2**
Entry #3	**Entry #3**	**Entry #3**
Entry #4	**Entry #4**	**Entry #4**
Entry #5	**Entry #5**	**Entry #5**
Entry #6	**Entry #6**	**Entry #6**
Entry #7 Top entry from second-place finals room		
Entry #8 Top entry from second-place finals room	**The top two entries from the second-place finals judging room are added to the projects in the primary finals judging room.**	**The top entry from the third-place finals judging room is added to the the primary finals judging room.**
Entry #9 Top entry from third-place finals room		

Why are Final-Rounds Designed this Way?

This system is designed to make sure that the top three entries in each First-Round judging room receive the opportunity to be reviewed in a Final-Round judging process. Participation in the second-place or third-place finals judging room run-off does not affect the judging in the primary room. **Many entries have progressed to Nationals after advancing from the second– and third-place finals judging rooms.**