

6. Showmanship

A fun part of collecting and the lapidary arts is sharing what we've found or made. When displaying at a local gem show, we not only get to "show off" our own collections but also to learn from others, getting advice, sharing tips, and forging bonds of friendship through mutual interests. But building an effective display involves more than getting a glass-fronted box and throwing in a bunch of rocks. Before you enter an exhibit into a show, county fair, or elsewhere, you should learn the rules of effective showmanship.

Activity 6.1: Techniques for effective displays.

Learn the techniques of assembling an effective display, such as balance, color coordination, labeling, and lighting. List them from memory.

Activity 6.2: Holding a workshop on display ideas.

Hold a workshop with fellow club members to discuss display ideas. Have a display case at hand and see what happens when you use various types of materials as background liners (light versus dark materials; plain versus patterned cloth; etc. What happens when you vary the lighting or use risers or stands to raise display specimens?

Activity 6.3: Observing and evaluating displays.

Either alone or with a group, visit a museum with rock displays or a gem show with exhibits. Carefully observe the displays, taking note of what catches your eye as being effective or not so effective. Make a checklist of techniques for effective displays and judge the displays you see against the checklist. Then hold a discussion about what works and what doesn't in a display. How could the displays you saw be improved?

Activity 6.4: *Making your own public display.*

Note: *This activity is required to earn this badge.*

Gather together the best of your rock, mineral, or fossil collection or your lapidary artwork and prepare a display for public exhibit. Good settings for displays include your school, county fairs, libraries, a local museum, a rock club show, or a science fair. Such a display might be done individually or collectively. If collectively, your club might approach a public library about doing a display for a month. Libraries like to do this, and they often use it as an opportunity to highlight their books on that particular topic.

Activity 6.5: Entering competition.

Enter into competitive display at your regional show, at a county fair, or elsewhere. Competitions usually have very specific sets of rules or guidelines that all entrants must follow. Work with your youth leader to make sure you understand whatever rules may be in place for the competition you enter.

6. Showmanship

- 6.1 Techniques for effective displays
- 6.2 Holding a workshop on display ideas
- 6.3 Observing and evaluating displays
- 6.4 *Making your own public display* (required to earn this badge)
- 6.5 Entering competition

To earn your Showmanship badge, you need to complete at least 3 of the 5 activities. (Please note that successfully completing Activity 6.4 is required to earn this badge.) Check off all the activities you've completed. When you have earned your badge, sign below and have your FRA leader sign and forward this sheet to the AFMS Juniors Program chair.

Date completed

My signature

Youth leader's signature

Name of my club

Leader's preferred mailing address for receiving badge:

Back-up page 6.1: Techniques for effective displays.

For detailed background on displays, you might purchase Patricia Mummert and William Shelton's *Exhibiting: The Show Biz Aspect of the Hobby*, available from the Eastern Federation of Mineralogical and Lapidary Societies. Help your kids develop a "tip list" of do's and don'ts of effective displaying. For instance, kids should learn such rules as:

- *use neutral liners to highlight, not detract from, specimens*

Display cases often look best when lined with cloth wrapped tightly around sheets of cardboard or plywood cut to fit snugly along the case sides and bottom. Two rules govern choice of cloth. First, you want the viewer's eye to focus on your specimens, not the background; choose a cloth that's neutral in appearance. Avoid patterns (spots, checkers, paisley, stripes) and avoid cloth that's glossy and reflects light or that's garish in color. Plain linen, canvas, or burlap in a neutral color usually works best. Second, choose a color that will highlight your specimens. Dark specimens can get lost against a dark liner; instead, use pastel shades of light blue, tan, eggshell white, etc. If displaying light-colored specimens, a dark liner (black, navy blue, dark olive green) may be more appropriate. Choose a color that enables your specimens to "pop" in the viewer's eyes.

- *use balance (in size of specimens, colors, and arrangement) to guide the viewer's eye across a display in an aesthetically pleasing way*

Choose specimens that compliment one another in size and shape and arrange them symmetrically around a center. A large specimen shoved to the side of a case can make a display look lopsided. However, a single large piece placed in the center and surrounded by smaller pieces can provide a pleasing effect. If using risers, place larger specimens toward the bottom of the case and smaller ones toward the top to lend a sense of "gravity" to the display. If displaying colorful minerals, arrange the colors in a way that provides interest to the viewer; for instance, alternate dark and light colored minerals.

- *use neat, clear labeling that's both precise and concise and large enough to read*

Handwritten labels with spelling errors on jaggedly cut pieces of paper leave a bad impression. If possible, you should use labels that are typed in large, bold print that is easily read from a distance, and labels should be uniform in size. Keep information on a label to a minimum; the centerpiece of a display should be the rocks, minerals, fossils, or lapidary pieces, and the labels should provide back-up info but shouldn't steal the show.

- *use lighting that's neither too bright nor too dim and that shines evenly across a case*
- Most cases include lights, which is essential to best highlight your display. At most federation-sponsored shows, no more than 150 watts of lighting is usually recommended. Light should fall evenly throughout the case, with no round spotlights or shadows.

- *finally, consider using a theme or story to tie a display together*

This is especially effective for educational displays that illustrate a process; for instance, the steps in how to make a cab, moving from rough material at one end of the case to stones that are polished and set in a mounting at the other end. Or you might display a grouping of minerals or fossils from one locality or formation; or one sort of rock (for instance, an agate collection) or fossil (a collection of trilobites).

Back-up page 6.2: Holding a workshop on display ideas.

Once your kids are familiar with the basics of assembling an effective display, hold a seminar at one of your monthly meetings to review those basics in an interactive manner. Such a seminar should be hands-on, with a display case front-and-center to vividly illustrate display techniques.

For instance, bring in different sorts of liners to show how specimens can get lost against a “busy” background of plaid or paisley versus how they can be highlighted against a neutral background. Demonstrate how dark specimens “pop” more effectively to the eye against a background of beige, eggshell white, or light blue but get lost against a black background. Conversely, show how light-colored specimens are enhanced against that same black background.

Show the difference that lighting can make, starting with no light at all, and then illustrating problems of high-wattage light bulbs that glare or bulbs that are too small and that create “spotlighting” effects within a case.

Demonstrate appropriate use of labeling. Show labels that are too large and too crammed with dense text versus those that are small, simple, and convey “just the facts, ma’am.” Illustrate the difference between hand-written labels cut out jaggedly with scissors versus typed or printed labels measured for uniformity and sliced evenly with a paper cutter. Show labels printed on thin paper that ends up curling at the edges versus labels printed on stiff card stock.

Illustrate effects that risers or glass shelves or acrylic display stands can have by adding depth to a display. For instance, show an assortment of rocks lined up in rows in an unlined case. Then show that same assortment in a case that’s been lined, that has tiered risers, and that includes stands beneath the specimens.

In a display, especially one entered into a competition, all specimens should be free of dust, dirt, and fingerprints. Leave a cluster of clear quartz crystals outside for several weeks and bring it in along with a pan of water and a toothbrush to illustrate the dramatic effect a simple scrubbing can have on specimens. (But don’t try this with your halite!)

After reviewing general display techniques, let the kids themselves play around with a case. You can bring in materials yourself for them to experiment with, or you can have them bring in their own collections. Don’t just lecture and distribute a list of “do’s” and “don’t’s.” Let the kids see for themselves what happens when they try different arrangements and display techniques. If you have members who have taken slides or prints of displays at various shows, a nice touch is a brief slide show or photo album of award-winning cases to show how it can all come together.

The Geo-Juniors of the Summit Lapidary Club (Ohio) have prepared a nice worksheet you might copy and distribute to help your juniors work through an evaluation session as shown on the next page.

WORKSHEET FOR EVALUATING DISPLAYS

(courtesy of the Summit Lapidary Club Geo-Juniors of Ohio)

Display background:

Plain, neutral color:_____ Dark colors:_____ Patterned background:_____

What stands out? The liner:_____ The items being displayed:_____

Are the case and items clean? _____

Balance of display:

How is the display arranged? By color:_____ By size:_____ By shapes:_____

Do colors coordinate or contrast?_____

Do large items balance nicely with smaller ones?_____

Does the display have a balanced look?_____ Or is it heavy in one area?_____

Is this display pleasant to view?_____

How might you change the balance?_____

Labeling:

Are labels easy to read?_____

Are labels typed _____ or handwritten _____?

Do you understand what the labels say?_____

Are all words spelled correctly?_____

Do the labels overwhelm the display?_____

Lighting:

Is there enough light to clearly see all the items being displayed?_____

Is the light too bright _____ or too dim _____ or just right _____?

Does the light fall evenly all across the case?_____

Theme:

Is there a theme or story? An example would be if there is one type of rock or fossil; or a "how to" focus for creating a lapidary project. Is there such a theme?_____

If yes, is that theme clearly displayed and conveyed?_____

Is there an overall "title label" expressing the theme?_____

What suggestions do you have to change or improve the display around a theme?

Back-up page 6.3: Observing and evaluating displays.

To satisfy the requirements for this activity, have kids write a brief written evaluation of three or four cases they've seen at a rock show or displays they've viewed at a museum or in a jewelry store window or elsewhere. As a start for gathering information for their report, they might use the worksheet contained with Activity 6.2.

In their report, they should illustrate a basic awareness of the techniques for effective displays and they should provide recommendations for ways in which the displays they viewed might be improved, whether through more effective lighting, better labels, a different arrangement of specimens, or a simple dusting of the display case. (You'd be surprised how many cobwebs you can find in some museum displays!)

Back-up page 6.4: *Making your own public display.*

Note: *This activity is required for kids to earn the Showmanship badge.*

A fun and rewarding aspect of our hobby is sharing what we've found, collected, and learned about with others. Collections aren't meant to be hoarded and hidden away. Kids should be encouraged to share their collections in a public display. The best venue for that is your own club's annual rock show or a rock show held by a neighboring club or society.

If your club doesn't hold a show and if neighboring clubs are simply too far away to conveniently attend, other options to explore include a display at a county fair, in a lobby or library window display case at elementary or secondary schools, or at a science fair. Opportunities abound. For instance, my local public library has a display case in its foyer and welcomes individuals and nonprofit organizations installing educational displays for a month at a time. Regional museums sometimes also provide a display case for a temporary rotating display. These often must be reserved months in advance, so do some early legwork to locate such public spaces.

Check for opportunities like these within your community. Then assist your kids in taking advantage of them!

Note: Because several other badges involve making a public display, kids can work toward earning their Showmanship badge and other badges simultaneously. For instance, see Activities 2.3 (Earth Resources), 4.5 (Lapidary Arts), 5.4 (Collecting), 7.3 (Communication), 9.2 (Leadership), 17.8 (Special Effects), and 18.4 (Fluorescent Minerals).

Back-up page 6.5: Entering competition.

Each year, each of the seven regional federations of the AFMS holds a show and convention that includes the opportunity to enter a display into competition to earn ribbons and plaques. Junior members can even win a financial reward! The AFMS holds a joint show and convention with one of the regional federations, rotating over the years to each region. The juniors case earning the most points at an AFMS-affiliated show wins the AFMS Lillian Turner Award, which includes a certificate, a mineral specimen, and a \$100 Series “E” Bond. Thus, it really can “pay” to enter!

Over the years, the AFMS has devised a detailed system of rules for all the different sorts of displays that represent the varied aspects of our hobby. Categories range from all manner of lapidary arts (sphere-making, cabbing, faceting, beading, intarsia, etc.) to mineral collecting and fossil collecting (with categories for micromounts, thumbnail specimens, and larger specimens; for self-collected fossils and purchased specimens; for materials from a single locality and those collected from around the world; and so on). Each category comes with its own requirements and rules, and—in order to ensure uniformity in judging—these rules have been collected together in a rather thick packet.

The junior program leader should obtain a copy of the AFMS Uniform Rules, read through it, and be on hand to help guide kids who wish to enter a competitive display. The rules can be complex and difficult for even an adult to follow, and entering competition can be daunting for anyone, young or old. While you shouldn’t construct your kids’ displays for them, you should be on hand to provide support, pointers, and advice based on a full knowledge of the AFMS rules for exhibiting.

The AFMS Uniform Rules may be purchased through the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies or your regional federation, or it may be downloaded free from the AFMS web site at <http://www.amfed.org/rules/rules.htm>. (It’s a long document, so make sure you have plenty of toner and paper in your printer!)

Within the Uniform Rules are sheets that explain at a glance the things to be judged within specific categories and the number of points allocated to each thing. You should copy these sheets to share with kids entering a particular category.

These Federation-sponsored shows aren’t the only opportunities for kids to enter competitions. Check around your local area. County fairs often sponsor competitions for hobbies and collections. Schools sponsor science fairs. If you come up dry, hold your own competition for your junior members and pebble pups at your club’s annual show utilizing the AFMS Uniform Rules or developing rules of your own, such as the ones on the next few pages sent in by Audrey Vogelpohl of the West Seattle Rock Club.

JUNIOR DISPLAY EDUCATION

(courtesy of Audrey Vogelpohl, West Seattle Rock Club of Washington)

Assisting junior members to display what they have collected, whether self-collected or purchased from commercial dealers, can be accomplished with this simple set of guidelines designed specifically for juniors. These guidelines are meant to be used at the club level for local show displaying.

Any junior can participate. The guidelines are designed with display categories, age grouping, judging, points, and ribbons. Displays must be a junior's own work and effort, with coaching from a parent, guardian, or sponsor. Rules of participation are kept simple and aimed at the Junior level. These guidelines are not intended to distract or prohibit any junior from entering formal Federation show competition under the AFMS Uniform Rules but to provide a somewhat more simplified introduction to competing at the local level.

Ribbons only will be awarded. There will be no trophies unless a junior is participating in competition under the AFMS Uniform Rules at a regional or national Federation show. The points used for this local program are for training only and are not equivalent to the points system used with AFMS Uniform Rules.

Judging will be education-centered in order to provide the junior with helpful, constructive written feedback for any points taken off. Literally all judging criticisms need to be fully explained so the junior will have a primer to work from and improve. The goal should be to build confidence in the junior exhibitor to move to the next step of entering competition at a Federation level.

A NOTE TO PARENTS

It is very important to have your support. We hope that you will work with your child or children if they have an interest in displaying their material. These guidelines are to assist you in understanding the process of juniors entering a display in our own local club show. Please ask questions of the Juniors Chair and other fellow club members and learn basic steps that will help your own child create an excellent display for the public to appreciate.

RULES FOR JUNIOR DISPLAYING

PART 1. GENERAL GEM & MINERAL SHOW DISPLAY GUIDELINES

1.1 Decide what you want to display

- a. What do you like to collect?
- b. Specimens from a special field trip?
- c. What is the show subject or theme?
- d. What will make your display *special*? (unique, best quality, complete collection, dramatic specimen, favorite)
- e. Examples of your lapidary skills? (carving, cabs, faceting)
- f. Have you made jewelry or gem trees?

1.2 Communications from your display

- a. Present your display as if you are speaking to a new friend that you have not met yet.
- b. Purpose of your display is sharing the art of nature, public education, and promoting your interests and club hobby.
- c. Keep it simple without too much wording.
- d. Coordinate colors that are pleasant to your eye and that highlight the specimens.
- e. Avoid use of excess “props” (feathers, sticks, photos, glass, wood, metal) in your case because they steal attention from specimens.

1.3 Specimens you decide to display

- a. All same material or different types of gems, minerals, or fossils.
- b. Size may be large or small, uniform or mixed.
- c. Quality should always be the very best you can provide.
- d. Number of specimens should be just enough to make your display easy to view and not look too “busy” or overfilled.
- e. Large specimens in back of display case, smaller in front.
- f. Always wash/clean your specimens before placing in the case.

1.4 Labeling your display

- a. Always have accurate names, correct spelling, punctuation, and information. To help avoid mistakes, proofread twice, then ask someone else to read the labels.
- b. Use uniform size of lettering on the labels and make letters large enough to read at about two feet from the front of the case.
- c. Individual labels for each specimen should include, at a minimum, correct name of mineral or fossil and origin, or where found.
- d. If all material in a case is the same sort of material (all calcite; all trilobites), identify on a single label at the back or floor of the case.
- e. Lettering should be typed or laser-printed on durable cardstock (not

- paper) than handwritten. Plastic covered labels are too reflective.
- f. Prepare a label with your name and age, but only place it into the case after judging is over.

1.5 Display case for your specimens

- a. Good display cases are hard to find so begin by borrowing a case for the show.
- b. Typical cases are “Federation Style,” which are about two feet high, two feet deep, and four feet wide, with a glass front. Dimensions usually vary slightly because there are different builders.
- c. Your case should always have a liner that is lighter color (white or pastels are best) than the dominant colors of your specimens. Dark or “flashy” liners will usually distract from the color effects of the displayed specimens.
- d. Wash hands before installing liners in the case to prevent smudging with finger prints.
- e. Best lighting is clear, incandescent bulbs or tube fluorescent bulbs that are “cool white” type, not to exceed 150 watts total per case.
- f. After you have arranged and labeled the specimens, be sure to clean the inside of the front glass before securing to the front of the case.

PART 2. DISPLAY AGE GROUPS

For AFMS and Regional Federation competitions, juniors are defined as having reached the 8th birthday and not yet having reached the 18th birthday as of the opening date of the show. But for local shows, you might consider a wider range of ages, broken up into several groups, for instance:

- Age Group 1:** ages 4 through 7
- Age Group 2:** ages 8 through 11
- Age Group 3:** ages 12 through 15
- Age Group 4:** 16 through 17

Having a wider range allows for fairer groupings and also for awarding more prizes. For more experienced kids who have exhibited before, particularly those in Age Group 4, you might consider applying the AFMS Uniform Rules when judging to prepare them for that next step in competitive exhibiting.

PART 3. DISPLAY CATEGORIES

Adapt categories to your own local club interests, but these may include:

3.1 Self-Collected Specimens

Any type, size, or location. Labels must include the specimen name and location where specimen was found. Date it was found is helpful, if available.

3.2 Minerals

Any size, type, or location. Must include accurate mineral names and locations on labels.

3.3 Educational

Any topic or theme relevant to rockhounding or rock uses. Brief, to-the-point wording is best on all labels.

3.4 Lapidary

Tumbling, polishing, faceting, carving, etc. On the labels, must include names of lapidary materials used.

3.5 Gem Trees

Must name stones, enamels, and/or metals used.

3.6 Fossils

Any type, size, or location. On labels, identify common names, genus and species names, locations, and geological age (period or epoch).

PART 4. JUDGING CATEGORIES AND POINTS

Points will be allotted out of an overall total of 100 as follows:

4.1 Showmanship: 30 points.

Overall appearance, detail, arrangement. Does the display stand out amongst the others?

4.2 Workmanship: 20 points.

Quality of lapidary and jewelry work or mineral and fossil cleaning and preparation. How neat and distinct is the work?

4.3 Labeling: 10 points.

Individual and group labels. Judges will evaluate accuracy only. Other aspects of the labels, such as whether handwritten or printed or whether done on paper versus cardstock, will be evaluated under Showmanship. Deductions of 2 points per error to a maximum of 10 points.

4.4 Quality: 20 points.

Color, size, rarity, definitive/classic specimen. Are your specimens the best you can reasonably find?

4.5 Educational Value: 20 points.

Use of maps, graphs, print, historical background, photos, etc. Will the viewer learn something from your display?

PART 5. AWARDS

- 5.1 Blue Ribbon** for 90-100 points
- 5.2 Red Ribbon** for 80-89 points
- 5.3 White Ribbon** for 70-79 points
- 5.4 Certificate for Participating** for under 70 points

The points used for this program are for training only and are not equivalent to the point system used with AFMS Uniform Rules. Remember, this program is designed for beginners training, so when you enter your display in competition at a Federation show to compete for Federation trophies, be sure you **ONLY** use the current updated AFMS Uniform Rules that are available from your regional Federation publications office or from the AFMS website, www.amfed.org.

PART 6. REFERENCE SOURCES FOR LABELING

In addition to the AFMS Uniform Rules, several other resources are contained on the AFMS website (www.amfed.org) to be used in properly labeling mineral, lapidary, and fossil specimens. These include:

6.1 AFMS Mineral Classification List

This lists the most current names used for properly identifying minerals based on *Fleischer's Glossary of Mineral Species*. It also lists names that have been replaced or that are now considered obsolete.

6.2 AFMS Approved Reference List of Classifications and Common Names of Fossils

This list of over 20 pages helps exhibitors place fossils within their taxonomic context, within their phyla, classes, orders, and subclasses.

6.3 AFMS Approved Reference List of Lapidary Material Names

A lapidary material sometimes goes by a different name than would be used if the same specimen was entered as a mineral or fossil. For instance, "Turritella Agate" is an accepted lapidary name, but if the same material were entered as a fossil, it would be called *Goniobasis* sp. The AFMS list provides accepted lapidary names to use in competition.

JUNIOR DISPLAY APPLICATION

Exhibitor's Name or #: _____ Age: _____

Place an "X" next to the number of the category for your display:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| _____ 1. Self-Collected Specimens | _____ 4. Lapidary |
| _____ 2. Minerals | _____ 5. Gem Tree |
| _____ 3. Educational | _____ 6. Fossils |

-----Do No Write Below This Line-----

For Judges: Judging Categories & Points

Please provide explanations for any and all points deducted, along with helpful suggestions. Add comments to the back of the sheet as necessary.

Showmanship – 30 points possible

Points awarded: _____

Overall appearance, detail, arrangement.

Comments:

Workmanship – 20 points possible

Points awarded: _____

Quality of lapidary and jewelry work or mineral and fossil cleaning and preparation.

Comments:

Labeling – 10 points possible

Points awarded: _____

Accuracy only. Other aspects of the labels (handwritten; printed on paper; etc.), to be evaluated under Showmanship. Deductions of 2 points per error to a maximum of 10 points.

Comments:

Quality – 20 points possible

Points awarded: _____

Color, size, rarity, definitive/classic specimen. Are specimens the best one can reasonably find?

Comments:

Educational Value – 20 points possible

Points awarded: _____

Use of maps, graphs, print, historical background, photos, etc.

Comments: