

TIPS FOR PREPARING AN EXHIBIT CASE

Many people are apprehensive about showing their collections to the public because they do not know how to arrange it. A few good ideas have been derived from attending shows and seeing museum exhibits. I will share these with you in an effort to assist you in preparing a display case.

Showmanship

Showmanship is very important as it indicates pride, care and ability of the exhibitor to create a display that will be attractive and hold the interest of the observer. Therefore anything that will detract from the beauty of your collection should be avoided.

Arrangement

The arrangement of your display at home is much easier if you have your own case. However, if you have to use the one provided by the host club, be sure to inquire about the inside dimensions and color so you can plan your layout accordingly. An eye-catching arrangement has a design, suitable background, corresponding color harmony, excellent balance, and good proportion. Show only your best pieces and avoid overcrowding. A simple design with graceful curves is more pleasing to the viewer than a hodgepodge of your entire collection.

Case Liners

The background material should compliment rather than detract from the display. Color and texture should be chosen with care. If possible bring a few items with you to the fabric store and see which material will be most suitable. It is very disappointing to invest in yardage that may prove unsatisfactory. Do not hesitate to use a color other than white, gray, or beige if it provides a complimentary background. Do not use brocade or patterned material. Stretch knits are advisable especially for risers. The texture should suit the specimen; that is, burlap for petrified wood, velvet for fine jewelry. The new drapery fabrics offer a wide variety of colors and textures and this source should not be overlooked. Dark colors are acceptable if the specimens are all one color and compatible. Bright reds are too garish. A gray tone of blue could be best, as it tends to blend well with both dark and light colors. It is always best to buy a little additional material if needed later to cover an extra accessory or two. The material in the bottom of the case should be free of wrinkles, gathers or pleats. Staples and thumbtacks should be unobtrusive. Covering for the risers should be stretched taut to eliminate unsightly corners, and preferably be of the same material as that of the background.

Arranging the design will be a test for your imaginative ingenuity. Make it simple and attractive. Do not add other items such as vases, bottles, mirrors, pictures, ceramic figures, etc.

Lighting

Lighting is an important factor to consider. Use clear light bulbs if possible. If you do use fluorescent lights, they should be of the daylight type. Insure that shadows do not occur and that your specimens are set to reflect the highlights to the best advantage.

All large items should be positioned in the rear; the outstanding piece should be the focal point, but not necessarily placed in the exact center; the smaller pieces in the foreground. Do not attempt to stuff all four corners and sides. A margin is advisable, the widest at the bottom.

Color

Color harmony is an important consideration. Too many bright colors can be overpowering. Tone them down with matted shades, varying tones of one color, and ending with the brightest one.

Labels

The labels are an integral part of your design so do not forget to allow space for proper positioning without destroying your outline. The size is governed by the largest one needed to contain all the information required using the same type lettering on all. Be sure the labels are clean, legible, and correct with no erasures, printed or typewritten on material that will not curl under the heat of the lights. Lay them flat or have them standing but do not mix them. Before bringing your exhibit to the show, have a knowledgeable person check it for you to eliminate as many flaws as possible that might cost you points in your score.

Layout sketch

Make a sketch of your layout showing the location and name of each item to assist you in setting up your display case without too much delay. It is always wise to bring along a few extra pieces in case of damage or loss in transit. Allow sufficient time to set up your display case taking into consideration the stress and confusion that exists when all exhibitors are vying for time, especially in the face of a deadline. A hasty job may bring disappointing results, making all your preparations worthless.

Recheck

Before leaving, re-check everything, paying particular attention to whether the right labels are with the right specimens. Remove any foreign material such as lint, string, paper, dirt, etc. Clean both the inside and outside of the glass.

Additional Guidelines

To assist you further, obtain from your Club a copy of the Exhibitors Manual or Guidelines. Also, the Uniform Rules published by the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies are helpful. These two publications are most valuable for beginning exhibitors. Know what is required or expected of the exhibitor by the Show organizer.

Start now, have fun and may you win many blue ribbons!