GUIDELINES FOR LABEL-WRITERS

The goal: Make visitors care. Make them want to keep reading. Make it fun, if possible. Make it personal. Tell the human story. Give it energy.

• Keep it brief.
  An exhibit is an experience, not a reading exercise.
  What are the three main points you want visitors to take away with them?

• Tailor your vocabulary to your audience.
  Are you writing for kids? For general audiences? You are NOT writing for scholars!

• Don’t waste words stating the obvious.

• Visualize how visitors will move through the exhibit.

• Let each text stand on its own.
  Don’t expect visitors to read panel B before panels C and D.

• Put the most important idea first.
  Many visitors read only the first line or two.

• Use the active voice as much as possible.

• One sentence, one idea. One paragraph, one main point.

• Use specific words, not abstractions. Concrete nouns. Strong action verbs.

• Use simple words as much as possible.

• Break long sentences and long paragraphs into shorter ones.

• Discard unnecessary adverbs and adjectives.

• Avoid sentences that don’t deliver the point until the end.

• Don’t tell the visitor how to react.
  Avoid words like “beautiful,” “stunning,” “moving.”

• Give each text a title, to focus the narrative and invite visitors to read more.