

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.**