



110 Orchid Street  
ENOGERA  
Queensland 4051

## Exhibition labels

An exhibition label is like a newspaper article.

- The headline should be as brief as possible and summarise the key information
- Information in the body text should be prioritised – most important information first: the first paragraph should carry the gist of the story

Here is how to produce 3 types of label:

### Main label

The Main Label introduces visitors to the exhibition. It should state the main idea of the exhibition. Try to keep the headline to no more than 5-6 words and the body text to a maximum of 150 words. Break into paragraphs of no more than 50 words.

Here are the layout and point sizes to use for the main label:

**Main heading in Arial 78  
point bold font, aligned  
left.**

Body text in Arial 48 point font, justified.

### **Sub-theme label**

The sub-theme label states the sub-theme story, which is an aspect of the main theme outlined in the main label. Aim at a headline maximum of up to 10 words and body text of around 100 words.

Here are the layout and point sizes for the sub-theme label:

**Sub-theme heading in  
Arial 48 point bold font,  
aligned left**

Body text in Arial 34 point font, justified

### **Caption**

Use captions to label exhibition elements such as objects and photos. Aim at up to 10 words in the headline and 25 words in the body text.

Here are the layout and point sizes for captions:

**Caption heading in Arial 24 point  
bold font, aligned left**

Body text in Arial 20 point font, justified

Credits ("Courtesy of..." etc) in Arial 12 point font, aligned left

## **Producing labels**

### ***Panels***

Panels (main labels, sub-theme labels) can be designed using graphics software (such as Microsoft Publisher, which is bundled with Microsoft Office from 2007).

Panel sizes vary – major panels may be up to 2m tall and 1m across. Start by seeing what size your printer can print.

Suggestion: save the panel design as a pdf file and take it to a printer to print. Print on glossy paper so it can be more easily kept clean. Additionally you can use a spray-on sealer such as Crystal Clear.

The printer will also be able to mount it for you. Ask the printer's advice on what to mount it on – options include MDF board, aluminium compound board, heavy card, Fome-Cor, Corflute. If mounting it yourself try double-sided adhesive paper sheet.

### ***Captions***

A good computer printer should be able to print captions onto light card.

Alternatively, captions can be printed (perhaps on heavy glossy photo paper) and dry mounted. Some hints on mounting labels:

- Use a dry mounting spray and light card
- Spray the label somewhere away from the card
- Place the glued label on the card
- Roll the label so that it sticks evenly onto the card
- Trim off the card

Don't make the captions so big they hide the objects.

Caption cards can be supported in a number of ways:

- Placed in angled groove in timber beading
- Cardboard stands glued to the back
- Pins into the back
- Perspex stands
- Etc

Aim to have all labels angled backwards to the same degree, c.45°.

Display hint – have all labels facing the same way. Don't try to angle them sideways.

## **References**

Beverley Serrell, *Exhibit labels: an interpretive approach*, AltaMira Press, California 1996

*Guide to label writing*, Powerhouse Museum 1986

MAGSQ handouts at [http://www.magsq.com.au/01\\_cms/details.asp?ID=33](http://www.magsq.com.au/01_cms/details.asp?ID=33)

*Powerhouse Museum label manual*, 1997

Louise Ravelli, *Museum texts: communication frameworks*, Routledge, New York, 2006

*Museum methods*, section 5, Museums Australia, NSW

Therese Weber, "Practical approaches to exhibition text", National Museum of Australia,  
[http://136.154.202.120/UserFiles/File/National%20Conference/2007/ThereseWeber\\_Practical%20approach\\_Weber.pdf](http://136.154.202.120/UserFiles/File/National%20Conference/2007/ThereseWeber_Practical%20approach_Weber.pdf)

### **NOTE:**

- A designer will design your exhibition better than you can: get one if possible
- These notes are for those who can't
- There are differing views on eg font sizes, label lengths: the important thing is to do what works and be consistent.