While specific guidelines vary from one division of the fair to another, these general guidelines apply to all exhibits—from Art to Zucchini:

- **Know when and where to enter your exhibit**
- **Read and follow entry instructions**—have the required number of pieces or articles and the specified documentation
- **Enter the correct category**—study the fair book to be sure
- **Label your exhibit**—for exhibits with more than one piece, label as such

Exhibits should be clean
- Dust off items that have been on display in your home
- Launder or dry clean clothing that has been worn
- Fluff quilts, curtains, draperies and other household items in the dryer to remove dust and freshen
- Wash canning jars and loosen rings
- Clean/wash fruit, vegetables and flowers

**STANDARDS OF QUALITY—QUILTS/QUILTED ITEMS**

**Piecing/Appliqué**
- Precise points/corners
- Curves/corners smooth
- Appliqué stitching complements design
- Blocks consistent
- Patchwork free of spaces or incomplete seams
- Grain is consistent

**Design/Creativity**
- Visual impact—the WOW factor
- Rhythm/balance in pattern and color use
- Color accent to provide movement and interest
- Quilting pattern enriches and adds quality to quilt
- Complementary fabrics, colors and/or textures
- Materials appropriate for use of item
- Borders/bindings enhance design
- Backing complements quilt top

**Quilting/Tying**
- Hand quilting is even on front and back
- Stitches are secure without visible knots
- Straight lines are straight and curves are smooth
- Quilt top and backing are smooth and free of puckers
- Even balanced tension and stitch length for machine quilting
- Machine quilting complements design or is nearly invisible
- Tie pattern is uniform over the quilt

**Workmanship/Presentation**
- Quilt/item lies or hangs flat
- Neat/square
- No loose threads
- Clean/free of markings
- Binding even and securely attached
- Adequate support for batting
- Compatible care requirements
- Embellishments complement fabric and design and are securely attached
- Construction is appropriate for use and care of quilt
STANDARDS OF QUALITY FOR FAIR EXHIBITS

STANDARDS OF QUALITY—SEWING

First Impressions:
- Overall neatness
- Fabric/pattern compatible
- Clean/well pressed
- Current or classic style
- Pleasing color combination

Construction Techniques:
- Functional
- Durable
- Inconspicuous
- Appropriate for fabric & design

Workmanship:
- Correct grain line for design
- Thread/notions match
- Plaids/checks/stripes match
- Threads trimmed
- Suitable seam type and finish for fabric and type of garment
- Balanced tension and appropriate stitch length
- Hems correct depth for garment and fabric—stitches inconspicuous
- Interfacing adds body and shape without bulk

Construction Details:
- Pleats/tucks uniform & on grain
- Pockets smooth/well pressed
- Sleeve fullness distributed evenly
- Zippers smooth, flat & covered
- Buttonholes fit buttons
- Elastic correct width for casing
- Darts tapered and smooth
- Lining compatible in color and care requirements with outer fabric
- Facings trimmed/clipped & under stitched as needed with appropriate edge finish
- Topstitching is straight with suitable stitch length and tension

STANDARDS OF QUALITY—HOME DÉCOR, NEEDLEWORK & NEEDLE ARTS

Many of the construction standards applied to garment construction are used when evaluating household and home décor exhibits. Some of these include:
- Straight stitching
- Balanced tension
- Neat hems/casings
- Square corners
- Appropriate seam, hem and edge finishes
- Secure binding
- Embroidery without knots on under side
- All items in a “set” are the same size, unless designed to be different
- Materials are appropriate for the design of the item
- Thread matches
- Trim complements item
- Grain is appropriate for design of item

Needlework and Needle Arts exhibits should be clean, neat, attractive and show originality. Because many needlework exhibits are also household articles, the design, materials and use must be compatible. In addition:
- Color combination should be pleasing
- Design should be appropriate for project
- Balance & Harmony evident in design

Materials/Workmanship
- Stitches are uniform
- If the back is visible, the back looks almost as good as the front with no visible knots
- Item has been shaped, blocked and/or pressed
- Materials are suitable for design and use
- Project is appropriately finished, stretched, framed, etc.

STANDARDS OF QUALITY—KNITTING/CROCHET

Overall Appearance
- Item is clean, neat and attractive
- Yarn/thread used is appropriate for project
- Item is well shaped and blocked
- Work is soft and pliable
- No loose threads/ends

Workmanship
- Gauge is consistent throughout item/garment
- Stitches are well formed
- Tension is smooth and even
- Edges are neat—seams flexible and secure
- Yarn/thread joined securely but without knots
- No twisted, split or dropped stitches
- Size of needles/hooks is suitable for yarn/thread and design
- Repeat of design is consistent
- Square or rectangular items are “square”
- Round items lie flat
Baked products are evaluated on appearance, texture and flavor.

Muffins—slightly rounded top, evenly brown, uniform size and shape

Biscuits—Light golden brown, flaky moist interior, straight sides & crisp outer crust

Quick Breads—Top is rough with a light sheen and may have a shallow lengthwise crack; even browning with moist tender interior

Yeast Breads—Well shaped loaves have golden brown tops with lighter brown sides. Crust is tender (exception French and Sourdough) and interior is moist and resilient.

White bread is light for its size and whole grain breads are heavier with proportion of whole grain in recipe.

Angel Food Cake—Golden brown exterior that is slightly rough/cracked with very tender crumb

Sponge Cake—Slightly rounded and light golden brown with small air cells and a tender crumb.

Drop Cookies—Uniform size and shape and characteristic of ingredients with delicate brown bottom and soft chewy interior

Rolled Cookies—Uniform size and shape with even browning and a crisp exterior and tender interior.

Bar Cookies—Cut in uniform squares or rectangles with chewy or moist interior and flavor characteristic of ingredients.

Fruit Pies—Top crust is flaky with a delicate brown color, bottom crust is crisp—not soggy; fruit is intact and at least 3/4 of filling remains in pie when cut. Flavor is characteristic of fruit and thickened juice has the texture of soft pudding

Cream Pies—Crust is crisp and well browned, filling holds it’s shape when cut, meringue is tender, lightly browned without excessive shrinking or weeping

Custard Pies—Crust is crisp—not soggy; filling is smooth and holds shape when cut

Fruits
- ½ inch head space
- Pack utilizes jar space
- Covered by liquid—No floating fruit
- Ripe, but not overripe
- Natural for product, halved or uniform pieces and neatly peeled

Vegetables
- 1 to 1¼ inch headspace (½ inch for tomatoes)
- Pack utilizes jar space
- Covered by liquid—No floating vegetables
- Liquid is clear without clouding or sediment—exception starchy vegetables and soup mixtures which include starchy vegetables
- Tomatoes may be canned in juice
- Uniform size/color and neatly peeled

Meats
- 1¼ inch headspace
- Up to ½ inch fat on most meats
- Product is well trimmed and not stringy
- Liquid varies with type, but should cover product and may be gelatinous
- Uniform color and piece size

Pickles and Relishes
- ½ inch headspace
- Natural color (exception—cinnamon rings)
- Whole product retains original shape
- Firm and Crisp—not soft or shriveled
- Uniform size
- Color contrast in relishes/mixes

Jelly, Jam, Preserves, Marmalade, Butter, Conserve, etc.
- ⅛ inch headspace
- Natural color (exception—Pepper Jelly)
- No foam on top
- Jelly has natural, clear sparkling color
- Jelly is firm enough to hold shape but not so stiff that product does not move when jar is tilted
- Jam and Marmalade are firm enough to hold their shape and move slightly when tilted.
- Jam has evenly crushed or small pieces of fruit distributed throughout
- Preserves and Conserve have thick syrup with uniform pieces of clear fruit
- Butters have a thick, even texture that flows smoothly when tilted, uniform color, evenly distributed spices

Safety First
- Jars should be sealed—no paraffin
- Appropriate canning methods
- Standard canning jars
- No signs of spoilage
- No blemishes, bruises or foreign matter
- Screw bands and flats are clean and free from rust
- Appropriate head space for product
  - Product does not touch lid
  - Product does not extend above liquid
  - Product does not have too much headspace
Why Use Standards?

Some standards are functional and others are aesthetic. For example, secure seams and an appropriate seam finish on a sewn item provides durability and long life of the item. Glazing the inside of a vase insures that it will do what it is designed to do—hold water!

Standards in Food Preparation and Preservation are based in science and they provide a roadmap to help us become better cooks and to preserve food safely. Application of art principles such as balance, rhythm, color and design to quilts, clothing and home décor items helps us create items that are not only useful, but pleasing to look at.

Simply put, standards represent the “ideal” - while we are unlikely to ever create a perfect cream pie or quilt, standards help us improve our skills as we strive to reach that ideal.

STANDARDS OF JUDGING—VISUAL & LEISURE ARTS

Attention to Detail
- Craftsmanship
- Difficulty; amount of labor
- Handling of the medium
- Detail—correct proportion
- Composition strength
- Interrelationship of visual elements

Significance
- Historical
- Cultural, social, political

Aesthetic value
- Pleasing to look at
- Movement/flow to guide viewer through piece

Presentation/Framing

Ceramics/Pottery
These items are evaluated using four basic criteria:
- Design—items are either functional or decorative. The item should be appropriate for it’s intended use
- Color—color combinations are pleasing and/or unique
- Originality—first impression and initial impact is important in competition
- Workmanship—items should be without distortion and have clean seam lines. The bottom of a piece should be glazed (except where covered with felt), as should the inside of any utility piece. Remember that cracks, chips and breaks detract

Photography
Standards for judging amateur photography:
- Impact/First Impression
  - Success in conveying a message
- Composition
  - Focus on subject
  - Balance
  - Perspective carries eye to focal point
- Technical Quality
  - Sharp focus
  - Use of light & shadow
  - Create depth through perspective/proportion
- Mounting
  - Enhance photo
  - Sturdy

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