

GEORGIA COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES

Introduction

Welcome to the Georgia Social Studies Fairs Handbook! This is for students who are eager to explore what social studies has to do with our daily lives, as well as teachers, parents, other educators, and community members who support them. The Georgia Social Studies Fairs lead students, through competition, to learn, practice, and perfect research processes that can and should be used now and in the future to make informed decisions that impact both today and posterity.

The research practices encouraged by the local, regional, and state fairs have been included in the Georgia curriculum for many years and are referred to as Information Processing Skills in the Georgia Standards of Excellence. It is the responsibility of every Georgia social studies teacher to teach those skills, which are listed on a matrix at the end of the standards for each grade level and/or course. The matrix provides the scaffolding for teaching the skills and applying them to the content addressed at each grade level. Refer to Appendix 1 for further explanation.

The Georgia Council for the Social Studies provides incentives, sets high standards, and celebrates student accomplishments by combining its resources with resources from a large group of higher education institutions, social studies-related agencies, and commercial representatives to sponsor regional and state competitive events.

The fairs are largely volunteer efforts of adults who value these processes and want the best for the children of Georgia. The Georgia Council for the Social Studies thanks all of those who give their knowledge, time, and financial resources to support our largest project!

With many thanks to Sharon Coleman, former Social Studies Fair Coordinator

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Purpose and Goals

Local, regional, and state social studies fairs annually present exhibitions of student work from grades 3-12. Each project is designed to show research and conclusions about the study of people and their relationships to their physical and social environment.

The student . . .

. . . Develops a visual and verbal presentation on a selected topic by

- Selecting a significant topic of study;
- Gathering and analyzing data;
- Interpreting findings; and
- Reporting conclusions.

The teacher . . .

. . . Uses a variety of instructional techniques for guiding students in understanding social studies concepts and research methodology.

The fair . . .

. . . Improves students' skills in social studies through

- Evaluation of student work according to established criteria; and
- Communication with judges, fair officials, and their teachers.

. . . Recognizes and rewards students' academic competence in social studies through

- Awards;
- Certificates; and
- Other appropriate recognition.

. . . Creates public awareness of social studies through

- Publicity;
- Displays of exhibits in public and business places following the fair; and
- Public attendance at the fair.

Social Studies Fair Requirements/Regulations

1. Projects may be entered by individual students or by groups of up to three students from Grades 3-12. The names of all students must be on the Official 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Online Entry Form. Group projects will be judged in the Class corresponding to the highest grade level represented by members of the group and in competition with individual projects.

Class I	Grades 3-4
Class II	Grades 5-6
Class III	Grades 7-8
Class IV	Grades 9-12

It is very important that a project is entered in the correct discipline. See Appendix 3 for assistance in correctly classifying your project. Projects that are not entered in the appropriate discipline are at a disadvantage when being compared to those which address a discipline-related topic. Social Studies fair project topics should address a topic in one of the following disciplines:

Anthropology	History
Economics	Political Science
Geography	Sociology/Social Psychology

After all Official 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Online Entry Forms have been received by the state fair coordinator and the final list of contestants has been published for the state fair, the classification of a project in a particular discipline CANNOT be changed. Similarly, classification CANNOT be changed after entries have been submitted to the regional director.

Traditionally, projects are first entered in school fairs, and winners advance to school system fairs, but some systems use other ways of determining what projects will be entered in the regional fairs. Each school system should develop its own protocol under the direction of the system level person responsible for social studies and in conjunction with the regional fair director.

Entries received after the region fair entry deadline dates will not be accepted.

If you are part of a school system that does not have a local fair, contact the state coordinator (fair@gcss.net) for assistance.

If you are not part of a school system and are not able to arrange to compete in a local school or system fair, contact the state coordinator (fair@gcss.net) for assistance.

2. Projects are limited to a **space of 30 inches front to back (depth), 48 inches in width (when opened), and 60 inches in height.** (Additional support equipment may be placed under the table, but not at the sides.) Entries will be placed on display tables according to class levels and disciplines.

3. If a project includes audio or video recording, slides, computers, or a combination of these audiovisual media, the total listening/viewing time may NOT exceed THREE minutes. Any audio media should be presented in such a way that it is not distracting to its neighboring projects. Electricity and internet access will not be provided at regional or state fairs.

4. At the regional and state fairs, at least one student who worked on the project must be present to interpret the project. Students should be prepared for an eight-minute oral interview (see next sections) of the project to the judges regardless of the number of the students on the project. Many times, after all projects have been scored, judging team leaders must use information gleaned from interviews to determine overall winners from among projects receiving the same number of points.

When there is no student present on the day of the fair to answer judges' questions, the project is at a disadvantage. For this reason, there will be no interviews scheduled prior to regional or state fairs. Teachers may request that a student be interviewed first because of other obligations on the day of the regional or state fairs. These requests should be submitted 2 weeks prior to the fair and emailed to the regional director if it is for the regional fair and emailed to the state coordinator (fair@gcss.net) for the state fair.

5. All projects must be accompanied by the writing components – follow all guidelines in the next section, page 6.

6. The display, that is, the visual presentation of the project on a tri-board must follow all guidelines in the section on page 9.

7. Project components should meet all criteria shown on the Judges' 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Score Sheet found in Appendix 12 and excerpted in each of the relevant categories in this handbook. For example, the portion of the score sheet dealing with the writing components is excerpted in the section on page 6. The score sheet is also posted on the GCSS website (<https://www.gcss.net/site/page/view/georgia-social-studies-fair>).

8. The construction of the project must be strong enough to remain intact when moved. Clearly worded instructions should be placed on any project requiring special operation. Explanatory matter should be kept to a minimum but must be provided by the student as needed.

9. Students must furnish all equipment such as battery packs, extension cords, bulbs, projectors, recorders, and monitors. Electrical outlets or internet access **will NOT be provided**.

10. Students must be responsible for setting up the project for display and must remove the project at the required time. At the regional and state fairs, projects should be left on display until appropriate publicity photographs have been made and sufficient time has been given for additional viewing. Projects left at the local, regional, and state fairs beyond removal time will be discarded.

Writing Components –25 Possible Points

1. Abstract

The abstract should be typed in Calibri 12 pt. font with 1 inch margins, printed, and placed in front of the display.

At the top of the abstract, the name of the project, student name(s), county name, school name, grade level, and the name of teacher should all be listed.

In the actual abstract, the following must be included and there is a maximum of 150 words:

- a) Brief introduction with your research question or hypothesis
- b) Methodology or research process
- c) Findings
- d) Conclusion

The abstract will be evaluated for the components listed above and for standard format and conventions of language including correct grammar, punctuation, & spelling with formal style and objective tone. The abstract is worth 5 points of your total score.

2. Bibliography or Reference List

Supervising teachers may require MLA, APA, or any other traditional documentation style when listing references and giving credit for the research. The supervising teacher should provide guidelines from a reliable source. Sources for manuals for these guidelines are Modern Language Association and the American Psychological Association handbooks; these handbooks may be available online or in your school media center or regional library.

A bibliography or list of references is required at all levels. It is recommended that schools/systems scaffold requirements for giving credit as students progress through the grade levels, with Class IV (Grades 9-12) using documentation skills that should be mastered before entering college.

In the bibliography or list of resources, all sources that were used should be listed. The bibliography will be scored based on the following criteria and is worth 5 points of your total score:

- a) From the first source to the last, a consistent style is followed in a standard citation format (APA, MLA, Turabian or other style as assigned by directing teacher);
- b) A variety of sources are used (primary, secondary, journals, books, newspapers, encyclopedias, videos, podcasts, art, etc.); avoiding over-reliance on one source or type of source; and
- c) Sources listed in the bibliography are relevant to the project's research question / hypothesis.

3. Source Reflection Worksheets (See Appendix 11 for a blank source reflection worksheet - this document is also linked on the GCSS website on the Fair Tab.)

From the list of sources in the bibliography, students should choose the 3 MOST influential sources and complete the source reflection worksheet copied below for each of the 3 sources. Students should have more than 3 total sources in their bibliography or list of references.

Wikipedia could be one of your sources, but Wikipedia should NOT be one of your 3 most influential sources.

Each of the 3 source reflection worksheets should be typed in Calibri 12 pt. font with 1-inch margins, printed, and placed in front of the display.

Each source reflection worksheet is worth 5 points for a total of 15 points.

They will be evaluated based on answering all questions thoroughly using correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling within the word limit of 200 words.

Source Reflection Worksheet (this will be completed for each of the 3 MOST influential sources)

Student Name(s) (List all students)

Project Title:

County Name:

School Name:

Grade Level:

Directing Teacher Name:

Source #

1) Name of Source:

2) Primary or Secondary Source?

For the next 3 questions, a maximum of 200 words may be used.

3) Quote that you used or Example:

4) How I Used This Source in My Project:

5) What I Learned From This Source:

Example- Source Reflection Worksheet

Student Name(s) (List all students): Renee Martin and Pam Roach

Project Title: Example Project

County Name: Example

School Name: Example

Grade Level: Example

Directing Teacher Name: Sharon Coleman

Source #1

1) Name of Source: Interview with Mrs. Lillian Carter, former mill worker, conducted March 2025

2) Primary or secondary? Primary

For the next 3 questions, a maximum of 200 words may be used.

3) Quote that you used or Example:

Mrs. Carter described how she started working at the mill at age 16 and remembered walking home each evening covered in cotton dust.

4) How I Used This Source in My Project:

This interview gave me more than just facts—it gave me a sense of what it felt like to live and work during the height of the mill's operation. Mrs. Carter's memories helped me move from numbers and dates into personal experiences. I used her stories to show how the mill shaped people's schedules, from early mornings to late nights, and how exhausting the labor could be. By including her perspective, I was able to contrast official records that painted the mill as an "economic engine" with the reality of hard work, low pay, and difficult conditions. It also helped make it more than a history of a building.

5) What I Learned From This Source:

From Mrs. Carter, I learned how deeply the mill influenced identity. She explained that even though the work was tough, it created friendships and connections, because people relied on each other. Her reflections also revealed the lasting health effects, like breathing problems from the cotton dust. This source taught me that history is never just about economics or structures—it's about the lived experiences of individuals and families.

Verification/Presentation Format

All writing components must be typed using Calibri 12 point font with 1 inch margins and printed. Should the components be typed by someone other than the student, include the following statement on the source reflection page:

"I verify that these materials, typed by _____, is exactly as I prepared it."

Student's Signature: _____

Display - The Visual Overview / Presentation of your Project Components

All Components must be present and obvious; the display is worth 40 possible points.

The illustration below is a sample of a tri-board. See photos of projects on the GCSS website under Fair.

<i>Left Side of Tri board</i>	<i>Middle of Tri board</i>	<i>Right Side of Tri board</i>
Title of Project		
Introduction & Background Information Methodology Detailed description of the process the student took to collect, interpret, and evaluate their findings relating to the research question or hypothesis.	Research Question or Hypothesis Research Findings Data/pictures, tables, charts, graphs, illustrations, maps, photos, etc. that relate to the project – All of these should be labeled and describe how each of the images relates to your project	Research Findings Continued Data/pictures, tables, charts, graphs, illustrations, etc. that relate to the project – All of these should be labeled and describe how each of the images relates to your project Findings should include possible counterclaims (or other possible explanations) and how and why these were rejected. Conclusions This section should address the project question.
On the table in front of the tri-board: Abstract, Bibliography, 3 Source Reflection Worksheets – Not stapled. Other display items related to the project that are created or made by the student may be on the board or on the table in front of the tri-board.		

PROJECT BOARD REQUIREMENTS

1. Introduction with background information and the research question / hypothesis

- background information, clearly state why the research topic was chosen.
- Clear statement of the research question/problem being studied (may be stated as hypothesis or a research question)

The introduction is worth 5 points and is composed of the following criteria:

Introduction with background information and research question / hypothesis

- ☐ precisely stated introduction
- ☐ relevant background information is presented establishing local, state, national or international significance of the research question / hypothesis
- ☐ research question / hypothesis is original or explores new aspect of a topic
- ☐ research question / hypothesis is appropriate to selected discipline category
- ☐ research question / hypothesis neither too limited nor too broad

2. Methodology

- a. procedures used in the research;
- b. explains the steps in the research process—how data was systematically collected and analyzed.

The methodology is worth 10 points and is based on the following criteria:

- ☐ steps in project development follow the norms and or conventions of the discipline
- ☐ social studies process skills are appropriately applied
- ☐ multiple authoritative print, digital, and other primary and secondary sources representing differing points of view are explored

3. Research Findings

- a. The Research findings include adequate and balanced information in a sequential and convincing manner. Counterclaims or alternate explanations (depending on grade level) must be included.
- b. Visuals that illustrate or enhance the research findings. These visuals could be graphs, charts, illustrations related to the project question/ purpose, and each should have an explanation about how they explain your project and a citation. See list below for more ideas.
- c. Accurately label ALL of the images and describe how each of the images relates to your project.

The research findings are worth 10 points and are based on the following criteria:

- ☐ accurately label ALL of the images and describe how each of the images relates to your project.
- ☐ information is organized to build to a unified whole (informative/explanatory)
- ☐ information included is significant, credible, and relevant to the research question / hypothesis
- ☐ information included is fair and thorough; there is sufficient data on which to base conclusion
- ☐ analysis of primary and/or secondary sources is supported by reference to data or textual evidence
- ☐ claims, counterclaims or alternate explanations (depending on grade level standards), reasons, evidence (argument); or information is logically sequenced. (if no counterclaims or alternate explanations are discussed, minus 2pts)
- ☐ clear evidence of critical thinking in the interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of information/data
- ☐ writing effectively communicates the selection, integration, and synthesis of the information
- ☐ avoids plagiarism or over-reliance on one source or type of source

4. Conclusion(s),

- a. Based on analysis and interpretation of data that directly answer the research question being examined
- b. The conclusion presents a summary of the key idea and answers the research question being explored.

The conclusion is worth 10 points and is based on the following criteria:

- ☐ answers the research question / hypothesis addresses the problem
- ☐ follows from the research findings and supports the argument/ information provided
- ☐ articulates implications or significance of the findings
- ☐ addresses the limitations of the project; are there other explanations (counterclaims)?
- ☐ outlines how the project could be further analyzed, refined, or extended

5. Effectiveness of Overall Display

The display and other media must be within size/time specifications (48" Wide X 30" Deep X 60" Height and a maximum of 3 minutes for any audiovisual materials-NOT the interview) and the research question / hypothesis and/or title must also be on tri-board.

The effectiveness component is worth 5 points and is based on the following criteria:.

- ☐ appropriate choice/correct use of media or format for data shown
- ☐ pleasing visual and/or auditory effect
- ☐ conscientious workmanship (accuracy, neatness, craftsmanship)
- ☐ creativity or originality (including the absence of commercially prepared models) in the construction, arrangement, and presentation of the materials
- ☐ correct use of conventions of language (grammar, spelling, punctuation)

Other Requirements

On the table in front of the display should be the writing components (abstract, bibliography, and 3 source reflection worksheets). See the section on page 6 for details.

Extraneous material that does not relate to the answer to the research question should be avoided.

Any materials on the board and models used should be the work of the student(s), rather than commercially designed and prepared.

The following are suggested as ideas for illustrating information and results in the visual display:

- Artifacts
- Charts and graphs
- Computers
- Diagrams
- Photographs and illustrations
- Historical collections
- Maps
- Models
- Murals
- Recordings (see details on time limitations and volume below)

- Power Point presentations (see details on time limitations and volume below)
- Video (see details on time limitations and volume below)

Materials made by the student may be on the board or on the table in front of the board.

The use of materials such as toy dolls, plastic models, and commercial products for illustration is discouraged. Objects should be made by the student and not purchased. Building materials such as wood, modeling clay, pipe cleaners, and foam board may be purchased for use in constructing models.

The total display must fall within size guidelines. Students are encouraged to use inexpensive project boards that can be purchased from school and office supply stores. **Projects are limited to a space of 30 inches front to back (depth), 48 inches in width (when opened), and 60 inches in height.** (Additional support equipment may be placed under the table, but not at the sides.)

Time Limitations for display components: Audio or video recordings, slide shows, computer presentations, and similar support presentations may not exceed 3 minutes.

Volume Limitations: Audio media (if used) should be presented in such a way that it does not distract from neighboring projects.

Equipment and Internet Connections: Students should provide their own cables, bulbs, projectors, recorders, monitors, and internet connections, if needed.

Electrical outlets: Students with projects requiring electricity must provide battery power. Access to outlets cannot be guaranteed and projects may not be moved from the assigned locations. No internet access will be provided.

Instructions for operation: Clearly worded, but succinct, instructions should be attached to any project requiring special operation. At the state fair, each project will be assigned a table number based on the class and discipline in which it has been entered/will be judged.

Following are suggestions for obtaining assistance in purchasing supplies:

- Solicit funds from the PTA/PTO to purchase materials for the backboard;
- Solicit funds from businesses and/or community agencies (ex. Adopt-a-School program); or
- Solicit you principal's support to use other instructional funds.

If funds are not available, students should also consider

- Designing your board from a heavy cardboard box; or
- Soliciting the aid of the school's art department to make inexpensive backboards for the class.
- Perhaps reusing one – teachers may have these from previous student work.

The Oral Interview

Students should prepare for the interview by having teachers or parents practice with them. Students should be able to give a brief overview (no more than 1 minute total regardless of the number of students on the project) of the development of their project and should be prepared to answer questions about the importance of their research question/problem, methodology, sources, research findings, and conclusion(s). Students should also be able to answer questions about counterclaims or alternate explanations to their conclusion(s) depending on their grade level.

Students should also be prepared to explain details regarding their most influential sources – the ones they chose for the source worksheets as well as other sources that they may have used. Often judges will ask students to explain their reasons for choosing the topic, to evaluate their work (suggest what might be done differently or additionally if the student were to do the project again), or to recommend what next steps could or should be taken regarding the topic. Students should be able to explain what they learned about the topic and any problems that they had with the research process.

In addition to the questions mentioned above, students should also be prepared for any of the following possible questions listed

a) Rationale for Research Question / Hypothesis — 5 Points

- What motivated you to choose this specific research question or hypothesis?
- What need, problem, or gap in existing research made your topic worth investigating?
- How does your project connect to current local, state, national, or global issues?
- Why is your research question important for others to understand?

b) Use of Discipline-Specific Vocabulary — 5 Points

- Can you define one key term or concept essential to your project?
- Which social studies vocabulary words did you find most important in explaining your topic?
- How did learning discipline-specific language help you better understand your research?
- What academic concepts from your discipline guided your project?

c) Evidence, Conclusions & Counterclaims or Alternate Explanations — 5 Points

- What evidence most strongly supports your conclusion?
- How did your research findings help you form your conclusion?
- Did you find any information that challenged your original thinking?
- What counterclaim or alternative perspective did you consider?

d) Extension / Refinement of Project — 5 Points

- If you had more time, what part of your project would you refine or expand?
- What limitations did you encounter during your research?
- What new questions emerged from your findings?
- How could your project be taken to the next level in future research?

e) Poise, Confidence & Communication — 5 Points

- What part of your project are you most confident explaining?

- How did you prepare yourself to clearly communicate your research?
- What was the most challenging part to explain, and how did you overcome that?
- How would you summarize your project to someone with no background in the topic?

f) Thoughtful, Authentic Responses & Research Knowledge — 10 Points

- What surprised you most as you conducted your research?
- How did your understanding of the topic change over time?
- What research method was most effective for you, and why?
- What was the biggest challenge in gathering reliable information?

Teachers, students, and other supporting adults should refer to the Judges' 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Score Sheet (the interview portion is copied below, see Appendix 14 for the entire score sheet) to review judging criteria related to the interview before, during, and following this step.

At the regional and state fairs, at least one student who worked on the project must be present to interpret the project. Students should be prepared for an eight-minute oral overview of the project to the judges.

Students who worked with a partner or in a group of 3 students still have the same total time and should share the time among group members with each group member contributing evenly.

Many times, after all projects have been scored, judging team leaders must use information gleaned from interviews to determine overall winners from among projects receiving the same number of points. When there is no student present on the day of the fair to answer judges' questions, the project is at a disadvantage, and no interview points can be awarded. For these reasons, there will be no interviews scheduled prior to regional or state fairs.

The oral interview is worth a total of 35 points with the following sections. Student(s) should:

a) Clearly explains the rationale for research question / hypothesis selection (need, gap in research, personal passion or some other reason).	/ 5
b) Correctly uses discipline-specific vocabulary (language of the standards) when explaining or discussing content, research process, and overall value of the project.	/ 5
c) Effectively supports conclusions with relevant evidence and explains how counterclaims or alternate explanations are not supported.	/ 5
d) Thoughtfully elaborates on how the project could be further analyzed, refined, or extended.	/ 5
e) Confidently responds to questions with poise and appropriate projection.	/ 5
f) Thoughtfully responds to questions: ☐ Responses should reflect authentic answers not rehearsed responses. ☐ Responses should reflect knowledge of content and the research process used. ☐ For groups: responses should be shared, with each group member contributing evenly.	/ 10

Project set-up and removal

At least one student from each participating project must be present on fair day to set up and take down the project.

The students who bring the project to the fair are responsible for setting up the projects and removing the projects at the close of the fair, as no fair personnel will be on site after that time. At the regional and state fairs, projects should be left on display until time has been given for additional viewing and official publicity photographs have been made.

Projects left at the local, regional, and state fairs beyond removal time will be discarded.

Steps in Preparing for the School Fair

Faculty Orientation

In past years, involvement of the faculty in social studies project development has been accomplished in several ways:

- Advanced studies and other individual social studies teachers assign projects as part of their coursework,
- Interdisciplinary teams work together to teach and coach students in the aspects of the projects related to their content areas,
- Gifted program collaborative teams of teachers contract with students to complete projects related to content area courses, and
- Vertical teams of teachers (Elementary, Middle, and High School Honors teachers) scaffold the steps in project development over 2-3 years.

Whether a superintendent, a principal, a team of teachers, or an individual teacher decides to require or make the opportunity available to students, all personnel involved should meet to discuss dates and guidelines, to determine the tasks to be accomplished, and to delegate responsibility for each task. A suggested Checklist for Planning School Fairs is available in Appendix 2. Also, see chapter 2.

Student Orientation

As a first step in the instruction process, students should receive an orientation to the purpose, components, and steps in the process of the development of social studies fair projects particular to the GCSS social studies fairs.

Required components include writing components (abstract, bibliography, & 3 source reflection worksheets), a visual display, and an interview with at least one of the students involved in the development of the project. The components will be explained in the project development steps that follow and in the correlated appendices.

Teachers may share photos of past projects (Appendix 7), lists of past winning project titles/topics (Appendix 8), and descriptions of components (see previous details in this chapter) in a media presentation and may recruit past winners or other resource personnel to introduce students to the concept.

Selection of Topics/Research Questions

Supervising teachers should lead students in the selection of a well-defined social studies topic that is neither too limited nor too broad. Appendix 4 provides further explanation of the terms limited and

broad. An example of lesson procedures for topic selection may be found in Appendix 5 of this handbook. Appendix 8 is a list of titles and topics of winning projects from past state social studies fairs.

Although the title of the project is not required to be in question form, the formulation of a research question or hypothesis that clearly defines the focus of the project is the first step in the research process. The research question must appear on the display board. All data on the display board should relate to the answer to the research question (conclusion).

Topics should clearly fall within one of the social studies disciplines (Appendix 3). The discipline must be identified on the Official 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Entry Form that accompanies the project throughout all levels of competition.

When the project is completed, the topic should be well developed, and the conclusion (answer to the research question) should be supported by evaluation and interpretation of data.) Teachers, students, and other supporting adults should refer to the Judges' 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Score Sheet to review judging criteria related to topic selection before, during, and following this step.

Confirming the Plans

Once the student has identified a particular topic for exploration and formulated a research question, a "contract" listing all requirements, benchmarks, deadlines, and the research question may be issued by the teacher and signed by the student and parents.

A contract is not required as part of the project, but experienced supervising teachers have found that students are more self-directed in their research, that the parents are more likely to provide the necessary support, and that the supervising teachers themselves are more likely to give feedback and connect students with resources beyond the classroom when everyone is clear on the expectations from the onset. This procedure also gives teachers and parents an opportunity to screen the selected topic for appropriateness for a student's grade level and maturity.

Examples of contracts from experienced teachers may be found in Appendix 9 (p. 42).

Establishing Methodology

Establishing and implementing a research methodology is another required component of the project and must be reported on the display board. Methodology includes the steps in gathering, analyzing, and interpreting the data used to answer the research question, and does not include steps constructing the display.

Experts from social studies fields in higher education or research careers related to the topic are the best sources of suggestions for appropriate methodology.

Methodology should include a variety of resources, and the outcome of each type of methodology used may lead to the use of another. Successful projects have utilized as many resources and tools of methodology as needed to answer the research question. A list of possible sources of information and tools for methodology may be found in Appendix 6.

Teachers, students, and other supporting adults should refer to the Judges' 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Score Sheet to review judging criteria related to methodology before, during, and following this step.

Collecting, Analyzing and Interpreting the Data

Once an appropriate methodology has been established, students may begin using the selected processes and instruments to collect information related to the research question. Data should first be organized in some logical format. Charts, tables, and other graphic organizers may be used to record information in a form that clarifies the relationship of the data. Once the data is organized, students may use critical thinking processes to interpret the data and make inferences that lead to a conclusion. It is the role of the supervising teacher to lead students in using critical thinking processes that lead to logical conclusions based on sufficient data. Teachers, students, and other supporting adults should refer to the Judges' 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Score Sheet to review (p. 9) to review judging criteria related to collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data.

Writing Components

When a sufficient amount of information to reach a conclusion has been analyzed and interpreted, the student should write a draft of an abstract and the 3 source reflection worksheets as well as the bibliography that includes the components described on page 6. Teachers should review the draft, and students should make revisions and corrections, if needed.

Teachers, students, and other supporting adults should refer to the Judges' 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Score Sheet to review judging criteria related to the writing components before, during, and following this step.

Constructing the Visual Presentation

Criteria for the display may be found on pages 10-13. Art teachers and other adults talented in visual display development may be enlisted to coach students in developing the best layout for their information. It is a good idea to have students submit a draft of their proposed layout for suggestions before beginning to work on the display and to check the use of space before attaching any items to the board. If models are used in the display, they should be student designed and constructed, rather than commercially prepared.

Teachers, students, and other supporting adults should also refer to the 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Score Sheet to review judging criteria related to the visual presentation before, during, and following this step. Be sure to accurately label all of the images and describe how each of the images relates to the project.

Preparing for the Interview

Students may prepare for the interview by having teachers or parents practice with them. Students should be able to give a brief overview of the development of their project and should be prepared to answer questions about importance of their research question/problem, methodology, sources, research findings, and conclusion. Often judges will ask students to explain their reasons for choosing the topic, to evaluate their work (suggest what might be done differently or additionally if the student were to do the project again), or to recommend what next steps could or should be taken regarding the topic. Students should be able to explain what they learned about the topic and any problems that they had with the research process.

Teachers, students, and other supporting adults should refer to the Judges' 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Score Sheet to review judging criteria related to the interview before, during, and following this step. Also, consult the first 2 paragraphs of the Interview section on page 13 for sample questions.

Competition Day

Teachers and parents should prepare students for competition day by making sure that all steps have been completed, that students are aware of the competition location and schedule, and that they have transportation.

This is also an excellent opportunity to reinforce desirable character traits that will aid them in making the most of the experience and to advise students as to suitable attire and grooming for participating in competitive endeavors. Career Tech teachers as well as speech and debate or a Model United Nations faculty advisor could help with poise, projection, and professionalism.

Fair Administration

Local Fairs

The preliminary competition is the school system local fair. The local curriculum director and school representatives should set a date for the fair early in the school year. It is recommended that system fairs be completed by mid-January in order to be ready for regional fairs in February and early March. This will afford each teacher sufficient time to plan projects with students. Careful consideration should be given in selecting a date so that it does not conflict with other community activities and so that it provides parents and public an opportunity to view the projects. The local fair coordinator should work with school level coordinators to determine how many projects can be submitted to the local competition from each school.

A committee should be organized to handle the fair and each member given a specific task such as the following:

- Providing space and facilities for the exhibits
- Securing judges
- Registering the exhibits
- Securing and awarding prizes
- Clean-up activities

It is recommended that students be used as assistants in all activities pertaining to the fair except judging.

Teachers and students are encouraged to start work on proposed projects as early in the school year as possible. Projects should relate to a subject being studied and assist the student and the class in learning more about the subject. Teachers should urge students to undertake individual projects rather than group projects. However, group projects are eligible provided no more than three students cooperate on the project.

Only first prize winners in the local fair (projects with scores of 90 and above) will be eligible for entry in the regional fair. The number of projects that may be submitted to the regional fair from a local fair is based on the student population of the local school system, using the following scheme.

1 - 9,999 students	8 projects
10,000 - 20,000 students	16 projects
Over 20,000 students	32 projects

The local fair coordinator should have students of projects selected to go on to the regional fair complete the Official 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Online Entry Form and obtain the required signature of the custodial parent/legal guardian for each student working on the project. These

permission forms will be uploaded during the completion of the online entry process. Go to gcss.net and click on Fair then you will see the Regional Fair Information link.

These Official 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Entry Forms should be sent immediately to the regional director(s), in order that appropriate arrangements can be made for display space and judges for the regional fair.

No project will be accepted for regional competition without the Official ONLINE 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Entry Form (on website under the Fair tab) having been completed and submitted to the regional director(s). Parents or legal guardians must sign the form, indicating permission or denial of permission to publicize the student names and awards received by the project at all levels and ALL items on the form must be completed for the project to be considered at the regional fair competition.

All information and signatures requested are used at the state level; missing and incorrect information may lead to inaccurate classification and labeling of awards at levels beyond the local school, as well as an inadequate number of awards.

Regional Fair Officials will complete the Official 2026 - 2027 State Social Studies Fair Entry Form and distribute the State Information Flyer to the top projects at each regional fair. Regional fair officials will ensure that all project information is accurately and fully complete so that project WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE STATE FAIR. The local fair director(s) should ensure that the projects are placed in the proper class and discipline for regional competition.

Regional Fairs

The best projects among the four classes at local fairs are eligible for entry in the regional fair (Class I – Grades 3-4, Class II – Grades 5-6, Class III – Grades 7-8, Class IV – Grades 9-10). The judges at the regional fairs will select the state qualifying projects (up to sixteen qualifying best projects) to advance to the state fair. Projects sent to the state fair must have a minimum score of 85 or above at the regional fair and only the top sixteen projects advance to the state fair.

All projects must be classified at the time of entry according to the disciplines of social studies. Teachers should be sure that their students' projects are put in the correct class and appropriate discipline. All exhibits at the regional fair will be set up and judged by class and discipline.

It is the responsibility of the regional fair director to give directions and information to local fair officials of all counties in their region. Curriculum directors or other appropriate persons should be consulted in setting a date for the regional fair. The regional director(s) should give specific directions to local fair officials concerning plans for holding the regional fair.

Other duties of the regional fair director (s) include the following:

- Providing space and facilities for the exhibits;
- Securing judges;
- Ensuring that the online entries are completed for all projects before the fair;
- Registering the exhibits;
- Clean-up activities;
- Distributing state information flyers to regional winners; and
- Entering the scores of projects into the official GCSS spreadsheet, thus sending Official State 2026 - 2027 Entry Forms for the state qualifying projects (up to 16 qualifying best first place projects) to the state coordinator.

The State Fair

The state fair consists of the display and review of the best (up to sixteen) projects from each of the six regional fairs. All projects that do not adhere to the stated size requirements will be penalized. Points will be deducted from the project's total score.

Information as to the date and location of the state fair will be posted in another document at <https://www.gcss.net/site/page/view/georgia-social-studies-fair>.

SOCIAL STUDIES REGIONS BY SYSTEMS

Dates, Locations, and Deadlines for each region will be posted at www.gcss.net under Social Studies Fair as they become available from the regional directors.



GEORGIA SOCIAL STUDIES FAIR REGIONS

East Metro Region

Buford City
Decatur City

DeKalb
Gwinnett

Henry
Rockdale

Northeast Georgia Region

Baldwin
Banks
Barrow
Butts
Clarke
Columbia
Commerce City
Dawson
Elbert
Fannin
Forsyth
Franklin
Gainesville City
Gilmer
Glascock

Greene
Habersham
Hall
Hancock
Hart
Jackson
Jasper
Jefferson City
Jones
Lincoln
Lumpkin
Madison
McDuffie
Monroe
Morgan

Newton
Oconee
Oglethorpe
Putnam
Rabun
Social Circle City
Stephens
Taliaferro
Towns
Union
Walton
Warren
White
Wilkes

Northwest Metro Region

Bartow
Bremen City
Calhoun City
Carroll
Carrollton City
Cartersville City
Catoosa
Chattooga
Cherokee

Chickamauga City
Cobb
Dade
Dalton City
Douglas
Floyd
Gordon
Haralson
Marietta City

Murray
Paulding
Pickens
Polk
Rome City
Trion City
Walker
Whitfield

Southeast Georgia Region

Appling
Atkinson
Bacon
Brantley
Bryon City
Bulloch
Burke
Camden
Candler
Charlton
Chatham
Coffee
Clinch
Dodge

Echols
Effingham
Emanuel
Evans
Glynn
Jeff Davis
Jefferson
Jenkins
Johnson
Laurens
Liberty
Long
McIntosh
Montgomery

Pierce
Richmond
Screven
Tattnall
Telfair
Toombs
Treutlen
Vidalia City
Ware
Washington
Wayne
Wheeler
Wilkinson

Southwest Georgia Region

Americus City
Baker
Ben Hill
Berrien
Bibb
Bleckley
Brooks
Calhoun
Chattahoochee
Clay
Colquitt
Cook
Crawford
Crisp
Decatur
Dooly
Dougherty
Early

Fitzgerald City
Grady
Harris
Houston
Irwin
Lanier
Lee
Lowndes
Macon
Marion
Miller
Mitchell
Muscogee
Peach
Pelham City
Pulaski
Quitman
Randolph

Schley
Seminole
Stewart
Sumter
Talbot
Taylor
Terrell
Thomas
Thomaston-Upson
Thomasville City
Tift
Turner
Twiggs
Valdosta City
Webster
Wilcox
Worth

West Metro Region

Atlanta City
Clayton
Coweta
Fayette
Fulton

Heard
Hogansville City
LaGrange City
Lamar
Meriwether

Pike
Spalding
Troup

Judging Guidelines

Selecting and preparing judges are critical factors to the success of the local, regional, and state fairs. Judges should be chosen for their ability to empathize with students as well as for their knowledge of content. Judges should be given the scoresheet in advance. In addition, an orientation session should be held prior to the judging. At this session, the importance of helping students relax and feel good about participating in the fair should be stressed.

It is recommended that the judges be persons experienced in social studies. Local college teachers, social studies coordinators, school administrators, publisher representatives, and teachers may serve as judges.

Note: Teachers from schools submitting projects should not be used as judges in the Classes (I, II, III, IV) corresponding to the entries from their school.

Local Fairs

The local fair chairperson is responsible for selecting the judges and establishing the criteria. It is recommended that the official judge's 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Score Sheet be used at all levels of competition to provide consistency. All projects should be judged by class and by discipline. The sponsoring teacher should ensure that a student's project is clearly labeled and correctly classified by discipline.

Regional and State Fairs

The regional directors are responsible for providing qualified people for judging at the regional fair. The state fair coordinator will obtain judges for the state fair. The following suggestions are offered.

1. Judges will use the judging criteria as presented in the official 2026 – 2027 Fair Handbook and the 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Score Sheet which are the rules for the Fairs. Judges should make informed decisions based only on the guidelines included in the handbook. While the handbook is intended to provide clear direction, judges should ask questions of the regional or state coordinators when additional clarification or support is needed. When judging, judges must:

- Consider the student's grade level and what is developmentally appropriate,
- Focus on the quality of the historical (or discipline specific) thinking, research, and presentation rather than personal preferences.
- Be as constructive as possible when scoring writing legibly at least 2 comments: one a "glow" and one a "grow" as these comments will guide students who qualify for Regional Fairs and State Fair. Judge comments will help students improve their projects.

2. Local, Regional, and State directors/coordinator will provide judges with the list of requirements/regulations for projects.

3. At least two judges should judge each project concurrently and then jointly arrive at one score.

4. Judges should be careful to give equal time to each student and each project. Each judging time should spend approximately 7 minutes reviewing the display and writing components and exactly 8 minutes in the interview portion and approximately 5 minutes finalizing the project score.
5. It is required that students (at least one student for a group project) be present for interviews at the regional and state fairs.
6. Each project should be assigned a score based on what is present in the writing components and display and available from student interviews. Judging teams will compare projects across disciplines and classes, using scores as guidelines, when determining class and fair awards and in making decisions as to which projects will progress to higher level competition.
7. No visitors (including parents and teachers) should be allowed in the exhibition hall during judging. The judges should not discuss a project outside of a judging team or with a student before the winners are announced.
8. The decision of the judges will be final.

Interviewing Students and Evaluating Their Projects

1. Many students are intimidated by the interview with the judges. Try to put the student at ease initially by asking friendly, non-threatening questions.
 2. Once you have established some rapport with the student, the interview should be used to determine just how much the student really knows about the project and how much outside help the student received. If you are suspicious that a project appears too professionally designed and constructed, a few carefully worded questions should reveal just how much help the student received.
 3. All questions you ask the student should be directly related to the project under consideration.
 4. Projects may be entered by individuals or by groups of two or three. Individual and group projects compete against each other in the same category. Take this fact into consideration when you judge.
 5. Judges should be very careful about what they say to each other when students are present. Casual comments overheard by the students can frequently lead to misunderstandings.
 6. Spend equal time with each project. Do not slight an obviously inferior project and do not show undue enthusiasm for an obviously superior project. You will devote eight minutes to the interview. Use the suggested questions described in the Oral Interview section (page 13) as a starting point. Other questions may be asked as relevant to the project.
 7. In order to establish some uniformity in assigning numerical scores, use 85 as the score for an average project, high 80s or low 90s for an above-average project, and mid to high 90s for prize-winning projects. The score of 100 should be reserved for a superlative project, one that could not be improved in any way. At the other end of the scale, there should not be any projects at the state level of competition that score less than 70. In summary, almost all scores should range between 70 and 99, with 85 as the average. You may wish to look over several projects in each category before beginning to assign scores.
 8. In your written comments, try to make at least two observations. The first should be something favorable or complimentary; for example, "good craftsmanship," "excellent choice of subject," "shows much hard work." Any unfavorable comments should be phrased in constructive terms; that is, suggest how the project could be improved rather than just describe what is wrong with it. For example, "The project could have been improved by placing results in a graph."
- Copies of the score sheets from the state fair will be emailed to the students upon request. If you make a mistake on the score sheet and it needs revision, please ask the coordinator for extra copies. Please be sure all comments are appropriate and legible. Students and teachers should be able to use the feedback to produce better projects in the future.
9. Once you have finished your interview, you should tell the students that they are free to leave the exhibit room. Announcement of winners will be made at the awards ceremony.

Adapted from original by David Laushey, PhD

Awards

Local Fairs

Appropriate awards and certificates should be given at the local level.

Regional Fairs

Regional fairs will grant ribbons and award certificates. Ribbons will be given on the basis of points scored on the 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Score Sheet. Students will not receive multiple ribbons.

Purple ribbon	Regional fair winners selected for state fair participation
Blue ribbon	First prize - 90 to 100 points but NOT advancing to state
Red ribbon	Second prize – 80 to 89 points
White ribbon	Third prize - 70 to 79 points
Certificate	All participants will receive certificates.

Additional awards may be solicited by the regional chairperson. Publishers, equipment dealers, film producers, insurance companies, civic organizations, and local businesses may be asked to provide awards appropriate to their business.

State Fair

At the state fair awards ceremony, the following recognitions will be made.

A certificate and ribbon will be given to all students to acknowledge participation as a state finalist.

A rosette will be awarded to the best project in each discipline in each class. Projects must be outstanding, regardless of the number of entries in a discipline in a class.

"Best in Discipline" – up to 24 awards

A medal and a cash award will be awarded to the best overall project in each class.

"Best in Class" - 4 awards

A medal and a cash award will be awarded to the best overall project.

"Best in Fair" - 1 award

A certificate and a cash award will be awarded to the supervising teacher of the student(s) winning

"Best in Fair". - 1 award

All awards will be based on the criteria given on the official judge's 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Score Sheet. Judging team leaders will represent judges from Classes I, II, III, and IV in the determination of overall winners.

Appendix I: Information Processing Skills, ELA & Social Studies Frameworks

Information Processing Skills that should be used in the development of social studies projects are included at the end of the Georgia Performance Standards for Social Studies for each grade level. A matrix shows at what levels each skill should be Introduced, Developed, Mastered, and Applied. The following skills are included:

- Formulating appropriate research questions
- Identifying issues and/or problems and alternative solutions
- Identifying social studies reference resources to use for a specific purpose
- Identifying and using primary and secondary sources
- Determining adequacy and/or relevancy of information
- Comparing similarities and differences
- Organizing chronologically
- Distinguishing between fact and opinion
- Identifying main idea, detail, sequence, and cause and effect in the social studies context
- Interpreting timelines
- Analyzing artifacts
- Analyzing graphs and diagrams
- Translating dates into centuries, eras, or ages
- Checking for consistency of information
- Interpreting political cartoons
- Constructing charts and tables
- Drawing conclusions and making generalizations

For the Georgia DOE Social Studies Standards, use this link:

<https://case.georgiastandards.org/a446e74c-463e-11e7-94f5-b49cee8b2d8c/3a1f299a-4640-11e7-9df6-ce03d41e18cb/1613>

For the Georgia DOE English Language Arts Framework, use this link:

<https://lor2.gadoe.org/gadoe/file/2c45c5fb-2ca7-4f70-981e-a092b8f63bb9/1/GaDOE-ELA-Instructional-Framework.pdf>

For the Georgia DOE Social Studies Framework, use this link:

<https://lor2.gadoe.org/gadoe/file/0762883e-eda8-408c-82f8-758cada68cfb/1/Social-Studies-Instructional-Framework.pdf>

Appendix 2: Checklist of Questions for Planning School Fairs

1. Who is the social studies fair coordinator for the system?
2. When and where will the system competition be held?
3. How many projects may advance from the school to the system fair?
4. Who will be the chairperson of the school fair?
5. When and where will the school fair be held?
6. What are the tasks necessary to implement the fair?
7. Who will do each task?
8. What is the process and timeline for reporting to other social studies fair committee members?
9. How will project development be reflected in lesson plans as addressing Georgia Standards of Excellence.
10. Is there a particular contract format that all students in the school will be using?
11. What content area teachers and support personnel (art, technology, media, language arts, math) are needed to mentor students?
12. How will the mentors know what is needed from them?
13. How will students obtain needed materials (home, community contributions)?
14. Who will pay for awards?
15. Who will take care of publicity?

Appendix 3: Social Studies Discipline Descriptions & Sample Titles or Research Questions

Anthropology

Anthropology is the scientific study of human beings from prehistory to contemporary societies. It includes all aspects of human development, both physical and cultural. The field of archeology is the study of humanity through fossils and artifacts. The field of physical anthropology deals with the biological development of humans. The field of cultural anthropology studies the ways humans have devised to cope with their natural settings and social environments and how customs are learned, retained, and handed down from one generation to another.

What did the Hookworm Eradication Program Accomplish Regarding Public Health in the South?

The Mongols: Civilized or Savage?

Upgrading Our Future: Are we Technology Dependent?

WWIII: Africa vs. AIDS

Economics

Economics is the scientific study of the production and exchange of goods and services. The economist analyzes the data, issues, and public policies related to the production, distribution, and consumption of scarce resources. The economist describes the economic system in an effort to explain how people satisfy their wants and needs. The economic behavior of humans is concerned with methods of doing business, producing, organizing (labor and management), financing, and regulating economic activities.

What is Coca-Cola's History and Economic Impact on Georgia?

How can Atlanta Survive Delta's Failure?

Common Cents: Should the Penny Go?

Geography

Geography deals with Earth's surface, the utilization of raw materials and resources, and human behavior as it is influenced by location and other geographic factors. Geography is the scientific study of the relationship between the physical environment and human activities. Geography deals with the description of the earth's surface, the changes that occur in it, the knowledge of its various parts (land, water, and atmosphere), and the theories of its formation and change.

Venice, Italy vs the Adriatic Sea

What Damage if any is Human Interaction Doing to the Great Barrier Reef?

How do Storm Chasers Help Save Lives?

History

History encompasses all that has happened to humanity. History, in a narrower sense, can be limited to the history of a country (all that has happened in that country), or it can be limited to a group of people, and institution, a community, etc. History is more than a systematic record of events of the past because it usually includes analysis and explanation of these events. History is the record of changes of civilizations.

How did Eleanor Roosevelt Become Known as ‘First Lady of the World’?

What are the Origins of Currency?

What Events led to Jimmy Carter Winning the Nobel Peace Prize?

Political Science

Political science is the scientific study of the theory and practice of humanity in organizing and controlling the power necessary for group living. Different societies have different methods of human control. The process of government can be studied by description, through comparison and classification of political data. Political science includes the art, science, and philosophy of the governmental process.

Citizenship-Can you Pass the Test?

Fifty Years After Brown v. Board of Education: Are our Schools Desegregated?

How is Title IX Funding Affecting Men’s and Women’s Sports?

Sociology/Social Psychology

Group living is the result of humanity's social needs and necessitates cooperation within and between groups. Groups are constantly changing in nature and functions because personality, attitudes, motivation, and behavior of individuals both influence and are influenced by social groups. Therefore, individual adjustment to group living is constantly necessary.

Psychology evaluates the mind and behavior. The impact of psychology on human feelings, thoughts, and behavior is the social studies focus while the impact on the natural sciences would be more suitable for a science fair project.

How did Sociopolitical Conditions in the Second Half of the 20th Century Affect Music?

Should Auto Insurance for Teen Boys Be More Expensive Than for Teen Girls?

Appendix 4: Guidelines for Students: Selecting A Topic

(Adapted from DeKalb County Elementary Social Science Fair Handbook)

1. Avoid topics that are limited. Example: What crops are grown in our county?

A student cannot write a report on a topic that can be explained in a few words or a sentence.

Better topic: What is the economic impact of peanut production in our county?

2. Avoid topics that are too broad. Example: What happened during the Civil War?

Topics which are too big make it impossible to find all the information that is needed to cover the topic adequately.

Better Topic: The Role of (name of a local historical figure, place or event) in the Civil War

3. Some topics have no available information.

Example: Why did Henry Hudson get into trouble with the crew of his ship?

We often do not know exactly why people did what they did in the past.

4. Avoid topics that are confusing because it cannot be determined what specific information is being explored. Example: What do people of Japan like?

We know that the people of Japan may differ in their likes and dislikes.

Better topic: A Comparison of Japanese women and American women in sports competition

5. Avoid topics on which people throughout the world cannot agree.

Example: What is the most powerful country in the world?

The topic should be supported with facts. The facts are used to arrive at a conclusion.

Better topic: Why might Japan be considered one of the strongest economic powers in the world?

6. Research the topic from a social studies viewpoint rather than investigating it as a natural science topic.

Example: Nuclear power as a political issue rather than "how it works"

Appendix 5: Social Studies Research Preparing Student Projects

(from the teaching archives of Dr. Glen Blankenship)

I. CHOOSE A TOPIC.

A. Social Studies Disciplines

1. ANTHROPOLOGY – People are survivors. I am a survivor.
2. ECONOMICS – People are consumers and producers. I am a consumer and producer.
3. GEOGRAPHY – People are earth dwellers. I am an earth dweller.
4. HISTORY – People are descendants. I am a descendant.
5. POLITICAL SCIENCE – People are citizens. I am a citizen.
6. SOCIOLOGY/SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY – People are members of groups. I am a member of many groups. – People are individuals. I am an individual.

[Ann Angell, Emory University]

B. Think of a current topic about which you like to read and study; think of problems you would like to see solved.

C. Look through newspapers, a variety of magazines (Time, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report, Psychology Today, National Geographic, etc.) and other current publications. Read current editorials, listen to radio and television news broadcasts.

D. Brainstorm possible topics. Talk to parents, teachers, and other students about topics that may interest you.

E. Identify any bias or strong feelings you may have concerning a possible topic. Determine if you can sort through the data and not be influenced to find a confirmation of your ideas.

II. FORMULATE AN APPROPRIATE RESEARCH QUESTION.

A. List ten possible research questions that deal with your topic.

B. Ask each of these questions about your possible 10 research questions:

1. Can you do original research on the topic? (preferable)
2. Is the topic relevant?
3. Will the answer be of any benefit to you or your community? Ask “so what?” about the possible research question – Does it matter?
4. Does the question use words that need to be defined?
5. Did you avoid questions with “yes” or “no” answers? (avoid)
6. Do you already know the answer to the question? (avoid)
7. Do you have strong feelings about the topic that could affect your research?
8. Will you be able to draw any conclusions to answer the research question?
9. Can you find information in your community on the topic?

C. Narrow your list of possible research questions to three.

1. Discuss the possible research questions with parents, teachers, and friends.
2. Choose the best research question.

III. DETERMINE THE PURPOSE FOR CHOOSING THE TOPIC AND RESEARCH QUESTION.

- A. Why have you chosen this topic?
- B. Write a paragraph explaining why.

IV. CHOOSE METHODS OF RESEARCH.

- A. Begin in the Media Center.
 - 1. Books
 - 2. Magazines (use the Reader's Guide)
 - 3. Newspapers (scan indices for the past several years)
 - 4. Government Documents
 - 5. Vertical Files
- B. Choose at least one (preferably 2 or 3) original means of research.
 - 1. Interviews
 - 2. Polls
 - 3. Oral Histories
 - 4. Case Studies
 - 5. Questionnaires
 - 6. Photographs
 - 7. Movies/Sound Recordings
 - 8. Experiments/Observations
 - 9. Maps
 - 10. Physical Remains (buildings, artifacts, landscapes)
 - 11. Unpublished Manuscripts (wills, letters, deeds, minutes, diaries)

V. CONDUCT THE RESEARCH.

- A. Devise a timeline.
- B. Keep a daily journal of the progress (both successes and setbacks) of the progress of your research.
- C. Roadblocks may occur during the research process. When they happen, do not quit. Talk with your parents/teacher and revise the plan. Not finding an answer may be just as significant as finding one.

VI. SUMMARIZE THE DATA.

- A. Outlines/Essays
- B. Statistics (in the form of graphs, tables, etc.)
- C. Photography/Diagrams/Drawings

VII. DRAW A CONCLUSION.

- A. Answer the research question using the data collected during the research. The project is of no use if you do not answer the research question. Your answer(s) may not be what you expected.
- B. Use decision-making charts to help you draw a conclusion.

VIII. DETERMINE A PRESENTATION FORMAT

- A. Select a format (visual, written, dramatic presentation, audio, etc.)
- B. Use charts, graphs, photographs, drawings, maps, artifacts, diagrams, films, diagrams, political cartoons, murals, recordings, slides, videotapes, computers, etc.

Appendix 6: List of Social Studies Sources/Resources/Tools

Topics for study are unlimited, especially at the local level. Examples include studies of business, churches, government, people, community change, and rural and urban problems. Gathering information concerning one project may require distribution of questionnaires to a sample of people and tabulation of the results; another project may be based on the study of manuscripts and/or newspapers; and still another project may be based on studying the government publications of some specialized agency. The following are sources of information.

- Newspapers, magazines, published letters, memos
- Unpublished manuscripts (wills, letters, deeds, church minutes, diaries)
- Government publications (international, national, state and local)
- Publications by private agencies
- Physical remains (buildings, battle areas, artifacts)
- Oral interviews, polls and questionnaires, photographs, sound recordings, and films
- Internet web sites

As a rule, a good researcher uses a variety of these sources of information. The use of one often leads to the use of another. The following are some tools used by social scientists to gather reliable data. Successful past projects have utilized as many of these tools as were appropriate to the subject researched.

- Case studies
- Experiments
- Observations
- Graphic studies
- Historical examinations
- Maps
- Samples
- Surveys
- Statistical analysis
- Interviews

Appendix 7: Photos of Past Projects

See the GCSS Website and choose the Fair tab for photos.

Appendix 8: Examples of Winning Project Titles & Topics from Past State Fairs

This is not a complete list, just some examples of the various topics and questions.

“Social Security: Are Educators and Others Prepared to Fund Their Retirement?”

“I Am Homeless: Where Can I Get Help?”

“Citizenship – Can You Pass the Test?”

“Pricing Trends in the Retail Market”

“What is Ramadan? What Happens in Ramadan and Why?”

“What is Coca-Cola’s History and Economic Impact on Georgia?”

“Protected Species of the Okefenokee Swamp” “Red, White, and Black Civil War Signals”

“What Did the Hookworm Eradication Program Accomplish Regarding Public Health in the South?”

“How Did Sociopolitical Conditions in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century Affect Music?”

“The Soul of the Samurai”

“Teenage Spending”

“Venice, Italy, vs. the Adriatic Sea”

“The Mongols: Civilized or Savage?”

“Why Are There So Many Chinese Girls Who Need to Be Adopted?”

“Upgrading Our Future: Are We Technology Dependent?”

“How Can Atlanta Survive Delta’s Failure?”

“What Damage, if any, Is Human Interaction Doing to the Great Barrier Reef?”

“How Did Eleanor Roosevelt Become Known as ‘First Lady of the World’?”

“50 Years After Brown v. Board of Education: Are Our Schools Desegregated?”

“Was the South Justified in Seceding from the Union?”

“How Did Voting Units Affect the 2004 Presidential Elections?”

“Should Auto Insurance for Teen Boys Be More Expensive Than for Teen Girls?”

“NASA Technology – Down to Earth”

“Can Public Schools Offer Fast Food as a Healthy Alternative Lunch?”

“What Are the Origins of Currency?”

“How Do Storm Chasers Help Save Lives?”

“Andersonville: The Worst Civil War Prison”

“How is Title IX Funding Affecting Men’s and Women’s Sports?”

“What Events Led to Jimmy Carter Winning the Nobel Peace Prize?”

“Common Cents: Should the Penny Go?”

“How Many People Can Identify the Continents?”

“What is the True Story Behind the Life and Talents of Blind Tom?”

“How did ‘Black May’ of 1992 Directly Impact the Politics in Thailand?”

“The Retail Industry: Friend or Foe During the Time of Economic Slowing?”

“How Successful Have the Land Reform Programs Been in Zimbabwe?”

“World War III: Africa vs. AIDS” “Magic, Religion and Science”

“The Plight of Sudanese Refugees in Atlanta”

Appendix 9: Sample Social Studies Fair Contract and Timeline

(Adapted from former Center Junior High plan, Waycross City Schools)

Name

Research Question

Supervising Social Studies Teacher

Parent's/Guardian's Name

By signing below, my child and I have agreed that he/she will complete a project for the Social Studies Fair.

We realize that doing the project will require work hours beyond the school day. We also acknowledge that the writing components portion of the project is required coursework to achieve the existing state curriculum objectives, and the teacher is responsible for providing instruction on project development.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Student Signature

----- (Cut along the dotted line. Send the top portion back to the supervising social studies teacher.

Keep the timeline for your information.)

September 1-22	Topic Exploration
September 15	Contracts Issued Letters to parents sent Requirements reviewed Timeline distributed Project board information distributed
September 22	Contracts returned to teachers
November 1	Last day to purchase project boards Teacher-led research process
November 15	Final draft of writing components Sketch of board due
December 10	Set up projects for school fair
December 11	School fair Awards Ceremony
December 12	School Viewing Projects removed from the media center

Appendix 10: Official 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Online Entry Form

Available on GCSS website under the Fair tab or at

<https://www.gcss.net/site/page/view/georgia-social-studies-fair>

These regional online entry forms are linked on the GCSS website under the Fair tab on the dropdown menu titled Regional Fair Information & Online Entries.

For Regional Fairs:

- 1) Read the handbook for all relevant details and preparation assistance.
- 2) Teachers gather the information that you will need to complete the online entry form (1 for each project):
Project title, Student Name(s), Project Discipline, Parent(s) Email Address
- 3) Teachers complete the Online Entry Form (1 for each project) for the correct region before the due date. Entries received after the region fair entry deadline dates will not be accepted.

Be sure to follow these instructions and the ones on the webpage when submitting entries to your regional fair.

For State Fair,

Regional fair directors will submit the qualifying regional entries to the state fair.

For Local Fairs,

- 1) Follow the directions from your local fair coordinator.
- 2) Complete their Entry Form.
- 3) Read the handbook for all relevant details and preparation assistance.

Be sure to follow these instructions and the ones on the webpage when submitting entries to your local fair.

Appendix 11: Official 2026 - 2027 Source Reflection Worksheet

(this will be completed 3 times, one for each of the 3 MOST influential sources from the bibliography, see pages 7 & 8 for more details).

This document is also linked on the GCSS website on the Fair Tab.

Student Name(s) (List all students)

Project Title:

County Name:

School Name:

Grade Level:

Directing Teacher Name:

Source #

1) Name of Source:

2) Primary or Secondary Source?

For the next 3 questions, a maximum of 200 words may be used in the responses.

3) Quote or Example:

4) How I Used This Source in My Project:

5) What I Learned From This Source:

Appendix 12: Official 2026 - 2027 Social Studies Fair Score Sheet

See the next 2 pages, this document is also linked on the GCSS website on the Fair Tab.

Project Title:	Project Number:	Score:
Student Name 1:		
Student Name 2:	Discipline:	
Student Name 3:	Class:	
School:	Region:	
Directing Teacher:	System:	

1. Oral Interview – 8 minutes. See handbook for details and example questions.		35 Points Possible
In answering questions and describing their research project, the student:		
a) Clearly explains the rationale for research question / hypothesis selection (need, gap in research, personal passion or some other reason).		/ 5
b) Correctly uses discipline-specific vocabulary (language of the standards) when explaining or discussing content, research process, and overall value of project.		/ 5
c) Effectively supports conclusions with relevant evidence and explains how counterclaims or alternate explanations are not supported.		/ 5
d) Thoughtfully elaborates on how project could be further analyzed, refined, or extended.		/ 5
e) Confidently responds to questions with poise and appropriate projection.		/ 5
f) Thoughtfully responds to questions: ☐ Responses should reflect authentic answers not rehearsed responses. ☐ Responses should reflect knowledge of content and the research process used. ☐ For groups: responses should be shared, with each group member contributing evenly.		/ 10
1. Oral Interview Total		/ 35
2. Writing Components- Typed in Calibri 12 pt font with 1 inch margins, printed & placed in front of the display. (See handbook for more details & examples including alignment with GADOE social studies & literacy standards).		
2. Writing Components- Typed in Calibri 12 pt font with 1 inch margins, printed & placed in front of the display. (See handbook for more details & examples including alignment with GADOE social studies & literacy standards).		25 Points Possible
a) Abstract – Limited to 150 words, must include the following: ☐ Format/Conventions of language including correct grammar, punctuation, & spelling with formal style and objective tone. ☐ Brief introduction with your research question or hypothesis	☐ Methodology or research process ☐ Findings ☐ Conclusion	/ 5
b) Bibliography- All sources that you used should be listed here. ☐ From the first source to the last, a consistent style is followed in standard citation format (APA, MLA, Turabian as assigned by directing teacher); ☐ Variety of sources are used (primary, secondary, journals, books, newspapers, encyclopedias, videos, podcasts, art, etc.); avoids over-reliance on one source or type of source; and ☐ Sources are relevant to the project's research question / hypothesis		/ 5
c) Source Reflection Worksheets – Choose your top 3 MOST influential sources from your bibliography and complete the source reflection worksheet for each. Wikipedia should not be one of your most influential sources.		
☐ Selected Source #1- All questions are answered thoroughly using correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling within the word limit of 200 words.		/ 5
☐ Selected Source #2 - All questions are answered thoroughly using correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling within the word limit of 200 words.		/ 5
☐ Selected Source #3 - All questions are answered thoroughly using correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling within the word limit of 200 words.		/ 5
2. Writing Components Total		/ 25

3. Display - The visual presentation of your project. See handbook for details and examples. The display headings are introduction, background information, methodology/research process, findings, and conclusion.		40 Points Possible
a) Introduction with background information and research question / hypothesis ☐ precisely stated introduction ☐ relevant background information is presented establishing local, state, national or international significance of the research question / hypothesis ☐ research question / hypothesis is original or explores new aspect of a topic ☐ research question / hypothesis is appropriate to selected discipline category ☐ research question / hypothesis neither too limited nor too broad	/ 5	
b) Methodology/Research Process ☐ steps in project development follow the norms and or conventions of the discipline ☐ social studies process skills are appropriately applied ☐ multiple authoritative print, digital, and other primary and secondary sources representing differing points of view are explored	/ 10	
c) Research findings: Choose text, charts, graphs, photographs, videos, maps, other illustrations or evidence related to the research question / hypothesis. ☐ accurately label ALL of the images and describe how each of the images relates to your project. ☐ information is organized to build to a unified whole (informative/explanatory) ☐ information included is significant, credible, and relevant to the research question / hypothesis ☐ information included is fair and thorough; there is sufficient data on which to base conclusion ☐ analysis of primary and/or secondary sources is supported by reference to data or textual evidence ☐ claims, counterclaims or alternate explanations, reasons, evidence (argument); or information is logically sequenced. (if no counterclaims or alternate explanations are discussed, minus 2pts) ☐ clear evidence of critical thinking in the interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of information/data ☐ writing effectively communicates the selection, integration, and synthesis of the information ☐ avoids plagiarism or over-reliance on one source or type of source	/ 10	
D) Conclusion: ☐ answers the research question / hypothesis addresses the problem ☐ follows from the research findings and supports the argument/ information provided ☐ articulates implications or significance of the findings ☐ addresses the limitations of the project; are there other explanations (counterclaims)? ☐ outlines how the project could be further analyzed, refined, or extended	/ 10	
E) Effectiveness of Overall Display: The display and other media must be within size/time specifications (48" Wide X 30" Deep X 60" Height and a maximum of 3 minutes for any audiovisual materials-NOT the interview) and the research question / hypothesis and/or title must also be on tri-board. ☐ appropriate choice/correct use of media or format for data shown ☐ pleasing visual and/or auditory effect ☐ conscientious workmanship (accuracy, neatness, craftsmanship) ☐ creativity or originality (including the absence of commercially prepared models) in the construction, arrangement, and presentation of the materials ☐ correct use of conventions of language (grammar, spelling, punctuation)	/ 5	
Grows:	3. Display Total	/ 40
Grows:	Total Score	/ 100
	Please write this score on the front of this page – flip page over →	