

Documentation FAQs

Q: How many copies of the documentation do I need?

A: Please make 3 copies of the documentation. Most contests have 3 judges and this gives the judges the opportunity to simultaneously look at the documentation and item. If it is a financial hardship to make 3 copies, make only the one.

Q: Should I put my name on my documentation?

A: In the West, the items are judged blind, so do not put your name on the documentation.

Q: Should I put my documentation in a cover?

A: That is up to you. Nicely presented materials are always appreciated more than poorly presented materials.

Q: Do I need to type my documentation?

A: No, but it does need to be easily readable. Typed material in a clean typeface on light colored or white paper reads more easily than handwritten and/or dark colored paper.

Q: How long should my documentation be?

A: The short answer is – long enough. Most judges will not have the time to read anything longer than 3 pages of text double-spaced. There just is not enough time to get through all the entries in the time allowed if the text is longer. This is not to say that the documentation should be 3 pages long in text. Some of the best documentation, I have seen has been one page of text with supporting list of sources on an additional page.

Q: Should I include photocopies of the materials I used?

A: Probably not. There are a couple areas where photocopies might be useful. If the item is an attempt to replicate an actual item. A photocopy might be useful to show that which is being replicated; in particular color scans. The second area is where the topic is very narrow or your choice of entry is not well known. Photocopies of some documentation with areas highlighted and notated might be useful to educate the judges.

Q: Should I include pictures of how I created the piece?

A: Sure. This would add to the information the judge has on the how of creation and that in turn shows the steps you took in the creation. However, do not let the pictures of the steps stand in lieu of a description of how you created the item.

Q: How many primary, secondary and tertiary sources do I need?

A: In the Kingdom of the West, there are no specific requirements for sources in documentation. Provide a list of the sources you used. Primary and Secondary sources may result in more points.

Q: What is a primary source?

A: The short answer is – an original item or document. The problem comes in when you extend the question – what is the item a primary source for? One example is a painting. The painting is a primary source for – how painting was done, the materials used in painting, and to some extent the societal dictates of what should be in a painting of that particular period and style. If the painting shows embroidery, the painting is only a representation of embroidery and should not be considered a primary source of embroidery.

Q: Is a post period translation of an original text a primary source?

A: No, the translation is only a primary source for the translation and that is post 1600. Only the original document itself is a primary source. Of course it is doubtful that you will get to use the original document. Therefore, cite that you used a photocopy of the original document if that is the case and the source of that copy. Also if you are using a translation, you might want to identify who did the translation and when.

Q: If I can only find tertiary sources, should I bother to enter?

A: Yes. Explain in your documentation your line of reasoning versus the sources. Do give citations of the sources.

Q: Should I put in a bibliography and if so is there a particular form I should use?

A: Yes a bibliography is a must. The form of citation that you use is entirely up to you, just be consistent. Also how you organize the bibliography is entirely up to you. If you heavily used a couple sources and the others were less well used, you might choose to separate them out in some way.

Q: My item may be in a style that is post 1600, should I enter it?

A: Officially the cut off in the Kingdom of the West is 1600 for A&S contests. Sometimes it is difficult when doing something that is late 16th C to identify sources which are pre-1600 and differentiate from those that are in the first quarter of the 17th C. State what you did, what you can document they did, and state why your item may or may not be post 1600. We would rather have you enter a contest and identify the possible ambiguity than not enter. Also, what might be period in 1590 Morocco may not be period in 1590 England, so be sure to explain time and place nuances if they apply. However, please be aware that this is not a license to enter items for which there is no possibility of them being within our time period as defined.

* Written by Sabrina de la Bere, Sabrina is a member of the Order of the Golden Poppy and former Minister of Arts in the Kingdom of the West and Principality of the Mists. She has been active in the SCA over 30 years. Over the years she has been asked to judge all manner of contests and periodically appears on panels discussing documentation and entering contests.