

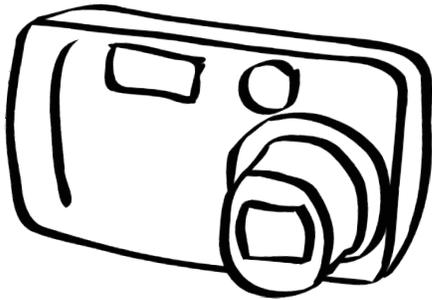


Be a Museum Exhibit Designer

Display Activity

A museum exhibit is an organized display of objects (specimens and artifacts) that tell a story. When we design an exhibit at the University of Nebraska State Museum, we think about who our audience is going to be and what natural history topics we want to share with them. For example, in February 2019, we opened a new floor of exhibits called Cherish Nebraska, which tells the story of Nebraska's natural history to visitors of all ages.

This activity will have your child create their own mini museum exhibit! Is there a topic your child wants to learn more about? Perhaps they already have a personal collection of some sort (rocks, shells, model cars, toy dinosaurs, etc.) that they want to share with others.



What you need:

- 5-10 objects
- Construction or poster paper
- Markers

GATHER

What you'll do:

1. **Gather objects (specimens) for your exhibit.** Your child should choose 5-10 objects or photos that they want to be a part of their exhibit.
2. **Decide what story to tell.** Next, your child should decide what story or stories they want to tell about those objects. For example, maybe your child has a rock collection they want to exhibit. They may want to compare the rocks, share where they obtained them, or explain the three ways that rocks are formed.
3. **Research.** Let's say your child wants their rock exhibit to share the three ways rocks are formed. The next step would be to have them research their topic using the resources they have available: books you have at home on the topic, trusted kid-friendly websites, etc.
4. **Share what you learned.** Once they have done some research on their topic, encourage your child to share what they have learned. Signs or posters can help tell the story or stories of the objects that will be displayed in their exhibit.
In our example about rocks, your child could make one small poster for each type of rock: igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic. The posters might include a summary about the type of rock, graphics and illustrations, and/or written descriptions and labels.
5. **Display your exhibit.** Find a place to display the posters and objects, and have your child set up their exhibit. Optional: take a photo of your exhibit and share with us on social media with #MorrillHall
6. **Give exhibit tours.** Once your child has developed their exhibit, have them give tours to everyone in your household. You might choose to make a video and share the exhibit with family and friends.



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More about our *Cherish Nebraska* Exhibit

Creating exhibits at UNSM is a collaborative effort. It starts with the scientists, educators, and exhibit designers who decide what story should be told. As the story develops, we locate and discuss what specimens, recreated scenes, and graphics could be displayed along with the text to help create the visual and interactive elements of the exhibit.

In the “Browsers & Grazers” section of the Cherish Nebraska exhibit, the part of the story is about exploring what Nebraska was like millions of years ago. One way to learn what Nebraska used to look like is to study fossil animal teeth. Plant eating animals have teeth that are specialized to eat certain types of plants. Plant eaters, called “browsers,” have jagged teeth for chomping leaves. Plant eaters, called “grazers,” have flat teeth for grinding grass. We know this from studying modern animals. If we find fossil teeth of many animals with teeth for grazing, we can say with confidence that Nebraska must have been covered in a grassland.

The fossils in the exhibit are resin cast replicas of specimens in the museum’s research collection. They are grouped into collections of browsers and grazers so visitors can see how the teeth are different. We also created a scene of a small ancient horse eating leaves to help visitors visualize their behavior. Graphics and photos help support the story.

Jobs involved in the creation of Cherish Nebraska - Browsers & Grazers section:

Scientists – Determined the story.

Educators – Helped the scientists focus the story on specific learning goals.

Script writer – Wrote the story in an interesting and grammatically correct way.

Exhibit designer – Designed how the text and objects should be displayed. Managed how everyone on the team worked to complete their tasks.

Fabricator – Made the platform, pedestals, and text panel holders.

Graphic artist – Designed the exhibit text and graphics panels and sent them to the printer.

Cast maker – Performed 3D scans of the fossils, then printed and painted the resin replicas.

Model maker – Made a fake hackberry branch and berries for the horse scene.

Case maker – Made the clear plastic cases that protect fragile objects.

DISCOVER

