

Tips on the Use of References

Student, as a participant in the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Contest, you will create your vision of the colorful, winged waterfowl that grace wetlands across North America. To do this, you will study these beautiful creatures, reviewing pictures, images, or video. Perhaps you will even have the opportunity to observe wildlife in their natural habitat at a national wildlife refuge, a park in your community, or your own backyard.

Some Tips on How to Avoid Copying and Plagiarism

Do not copy or trace any part of someone else's photo or artwork – whether published or unpublished -- onto your drawing. Copied, traced or plagiarized paintings **WILL BE DISQUALIFIED**. This is a very important rule and the tips below will help you to avoid being disqualified.

What do we mean by plagiarism and copying? Plagiarism is when you deliberately take someone else's work, don't acknowledge the source and claim it as your own. Copying is when you imitate or reproduce someone else's work and make an exact or almost exact duplicate of it. If you duplicate someone else's work, you have copied them and, in this contest, we do not want you to do that.

Why are copying and plagiarism against the rules? Plagiarism is dishonest because you are not giving credit to somebody else's creation. Copying is stealing someone else's artwork and it limits you as an artist. You would not be allowed to copy someone else on a term paper; artwork has the same rules - we want to see YOUR creation, not someone else's.

We provide the Reference Form and require (if you are in Grades 7-12 (Groups III or IV)) or encourage (if you are younger) you to use it in order to help you follow this rule. Citing your references is a good habit to learn, and it makes it easier to show where you found your ideas or learned a specific technique. You may be asked to show or provide these reference before your artwork can be judged.

By properly filling out the Reference Form and reporting all the reference materials that you used to create your artwork, you acknowledge where your ideas come from. You can find more tips to fill out the Reference Form on page 16.

You may not copy someone else's photograph or artwork - even if you don't think it is copyrighted or published or even if you have permission to use it. You must develop your own creation. Often it is difficult to come up with ideas, so where should you start?

There are many different ideas and viewpoints on what makes a student's work original and authentic. The following are suggestions for you to follow that may help you be more creative and develop your unique masterpiece for this contest. Do not stop at your current level of skill - challenge yourself to try a different method, use a different media, or try a different subject.

Go outside and observe waterfowl around your backyard, your neighborhood, a national wildlife refuge, or park. Investigate and explore their habitat, behavior, and anatomy. Take your own photographs and draw your own sketches based on what you observe.

How will you incorporate visual art elements (color, texture, shape, etc.)? How will you express what you know about the principles of design and composition (balance, pattern, unity, etc.)? What visual effects (such as motion and depth) can you use to make an impression on the viewer?

Although many of us may have learned to draw by copying a well known drawing or someone else's photograph, this is not allowed in this Art Contest - we want you express what YOU have learned about waterfowl and wetlands. We want you to be creative in developing your ideas and take what you have learned and create your own visual waterfowl message. While technical skill is important we are interested in your creative work.

You may find a picture that inspires you and you want to try to imitate that picture. However, you may not copy someone else's picture when creating your own design. Even if the picture belongs to someone who gives you permission to use it, do not copy it.

You may also look at past duck stamps for ideas and inspiration - but again, do not copy them.

You may also look at photos from books, magazines, or the internet, or photos taken by someone else to study the coloring, feathers, or anatomy of different species of ducks, geese and swans.

Consider how photographers and other artists compose their masterpieces. Do you like the species of waterfowl or its setting? Is the animal displaying some interesting behavior? What inspires you about their artwork that you would like to share in your creation?

If using a reference source, change it to fit your style and ideas. If you see a painting of a scene of ducks on a log, go find your own log and your own duck reference, change the species and setting, make it your own idea based on the work of another that inspired you.

Extensively change the "attitude" of the duck for your creation. For example, if the duck's head is upright, draw it facing down as if it is drinking water, or turn the angle of the duck's head. If the duck in the photo is in profile, draw the bird as if it is turning its body at a different angle. If the photo of the duck is in overall sunlight, change and paint the bird with a "sidelight." If the duck is swimming on blue water in a published photo, paint or draw your own water ripples and make it greenish in color.

Take decoys or taxidermy mounts and place them in various settings. (Decoys may be depicted in your entry but a live waterfowl must be the dominant feature in the work.)

Collect aquatic plants, leaves, and bark to study and make sketches of these materials.

Develop your own waterfowl sketchbooks and photo albums and fill them with ideas and different compositions and layouts of waterfowl and their habitats.

When you are ready to start painting from your sketches, we recommend you use a grid method to transfer your design onto your drawing board.

Your artwork should not be easily recognized as coming from any particular source. Remember, copying anyone else's art limits you as an artist. You will grow more as an artist by trying different techniques, angles, and backgrounds in your design. When someone views your artwork they should not be able to recognize the reference you used to create it.

Example of How to Use a Reference Image

Visual Reference

2004 Federal Duck Stamp



Improper Use of Reference

This illustration would be disqualified.



This is an improper use of the reference. This is a nearly identical copy of the 2004 Federal Duck Stamp and would be disqualified.

Proper Use of Reference

This illustration could be entered.



This is a proper use of the reference. Study the differences between the stamp and this drawing. The snow goose is featured in a different flight angle. Additional features in the stamp, such as the lighthouse, have been omitted. What other differences do you see?

Make it original. Make it your own!

Artistic Reference Form

You should explore your own sense of creativity while producing your original wildlife artwork. The Reference Form is where you will record the images, books, or objects you studied to create your original artwork.

Filling in Your Reference Form

For students in Grades 7-12 (Groups III and IV), you must include this Reference Form with your entry or your entry will be disqualified.

Reference all sources.

Include as much information as possible (see examples below).

Reference Examples

Published References:

Must include full name of author, photographer or editor; title of the publication and page number(s). Example: Mueller, Keith. Waterfowl Concepts. Pages 6, 32, 54, 112.

References Not Found in a Book:

Such as personal observations or photographs: must include full name of observer or photographer, species, date, and location. Example: Herman, Amber, Mallards, Mississippi River, Davenport, Iowa, May 2007.

Images from the Internet:

Must include photographer or artist's full name, and full website address. Example: Sevcik, Jan, www.naturephoto-cz.com/photos/sevcik/mallard—anas-platyrhyncos-5.jpg

Other Sources:

Provide as much identifying information as possible.

All students in grades 7-12 must submit the Reference Form along with your entry. You may attach the Reference Form to your artwork or include it in the envelope with your entry, or give it to your teacher to send along with your artwork. Students in grade groups I and II are encouraged to work with their teacher or parent to complete the Reference Form, but are not required to submit it with their entry. All students are encouraged to include their reference materials (or copies thereof) with their entry.

