

Writing an exhibition label on 1 page

getgidmi.com/en/tools/exhibition-label-reviewer

THE 3 BLOCKS, KEPT SEPARATE

Identification Maker, title or denomination, date, materials and techniques, provenance, museum number. The same order across the whole display.

Interpretation The context of the work, one key to read it, one detail to look at. The first sentence carries the point.

Credits How the work entered the collection, donor, photo rights. Last, and quieter.

THE BENCHMARKS

150 to 500 characters overall · interpretive text: **50 to 60 words** · first sentence: **16 words at most** · one idea per sentence

THE 6 MOVES THAT CHANGE A LABEL

- The most important information first. Hurried visitors will only read that sentence.
- Short, active sentences. Visitors read standing up, often in company.
- Explain every technical term the first time it appears. One obscure word stops the reading.
- Point the eye to a visible detail. Do not describe what everyone already sees.
- No empty praise ('stunning', 'unmissable'): precise facts instead.
- Admit uncertainty: 'attributed to', 'probably'. Visitors value honesty.

BEFORE PRINTING

- Read the label out loud. If you stumble, your visitors will stumble.
- Have it reread by someone who does not know the subject, or by a visitor panel.
- Check the text against what visitors actually see once the work is installed.
- For an even wider audience, Easy Read principles apply very well to labels.

Benchmarks drawn from two public references: 'Les cartels dans un musée de France', Service des musées de France (updated July 2025) and 'Writing Gallery Text at the V&A: A Ten Point Guide', Victoria and Albert Museum (2018). A memo by Gidmi, the storytelling tool for cultural venues. Your label still needs your team's review and approval.