

## **ANTLER, BONE, IVORY, TOOTH**

Beware, sometimes synthetic materials are made to look like this. See "PLASTIC"

Locate a smooth area that is not flaking, powdery or decorated.

Choose a location that will not show during exhibit or photography.

Apply base coat of B-72, paper label, top coat

Use paper tag, labeled bag/ box as redundancy and to reduce handling.

## **BASKETRY**

Typically, the underside of a basket is labeled and the inside of the lid, if present.

Choose a location that will not show during exhibit or photography.

For baskets with very large elements, like cedar bark mats or bark containers, apply base coat of B-72, paper label, top coat.

For baskets with a finer weave structure, do not use adhesive but instead a small hanging tag sewn in between the weave with a needle that may pass through easily.

Use labeled bag/ box as redundancy and to reduce handling.

## **CERAMIC**

Typically, the underside of a ceramic is labeled unless it is unusually large or heavy, and then a place is chosen low on the "back" side.

Locate a smooth area that is not flaking, powdery, painted or decorated. The smooth, hard, shiny exterior of some pottery, called glaze, is made of glass and can be labeled.

Beware painted surfaces and do not mark or adhere onto them. Do not mark break edges of sherds.

Choose a location that will not show during exhibit or photography. Do not obscure maker's marks on base.

Apply base coat of B-72, paper label, top coat

Use paper tag, labeled bag/ box as redundancy and to reduce handling.

## **GLASS**

Typically, the underside of a glass vessel is labeled.

Large beads may be labeled with a tag on a string.

Locate a smooth area that is not flaking, powdery or decorated. Do not mark glass that suffers from glass disease (weeping, crizzling, etc)

Choose a location that will not show during exhibit or photography. Small font size on paper label helps.

Apply base coat of B-72, paper label, top coat

Use paper tag, labeled bag/ box as redundancy and to reduce handling.

## BOOKS and PAPER

Inside cover and reverse of title page are the common places to mark a book. Writing on the top outer corner means the book doesn't have to be opened all the way.

Number is usually applied to the back upper right corner of a sheet of paper such as a document or a print/drawing/ watercolor.

Choose a location that will not show during exhibit or photography.

Avoid labeling in an area that already has information written there (price, owner's name, signature, etc.)

Apply number with a #2 or HB pencil, taking care not to press hard enough to make indentations. Write on a firm surface.

Use a labeled bag/ folder/ box as redundancy and to reduce handling. Insert an acid-free paper bookmark with number in pencil at the top to fragile books.

## METAL

Typically, the underside of a metal item is labeled. If the metal item is very heavy, the "back" may be labeled instead.

Locate a smooth area that is not flaking, powdery, rusty, decorated, or coated. Musical instruments are often coated, for example.

Coins are usually not labeled directly. Edges may be labeled if large enough.

Choose a location that will not show during exhibit or photography. Small font size on paper label helps for smaller objects

Apply base coat of B-72, paper label, top coat. Avoid artist acrylics and adhesives containing ammonia with copper or alloys with copper such as sterling silver.

Use paper tag, labeled bag/ box as redundancy and to reduce handling.

Jewelry may be especially difficult to label, even with tiny font size. Redundant tags are helpful.

## BALEEN, CLAW, HOOF, HORN

Beware, sometimes synthetic materials are made to look like this. See "PLASTIC".

Locate a smooth area that is not flaking, powdery or decorated.

Choose a location that will not show during exhibit or photography.

Apply base coat of B-72, paper label, top coat

Use paper tag, labeled bag/ box as redundancy and to reduce handling.

## FEATHER, FUR, GUTSKIN, LEATHER

Feathers of significant size may be labeled on the quill with a small font paper label.

Most feather and skin artifacts have delicate surfaces and the removal of an adhesive label will leave a stain.

Many feather and skin artifacts are connected to composite objects with other parts that may be labeled instead.

Some feather and skin items are sewn and a Tyvek label sewn through original stitch holes with white cotton thread may work, using the technique recommended for garments and textiles.

Stitch each end of the label so minimal snips are needed for removal.

No new holes shall be made. If no technique above will work, use a paper tag or label the enclosure.

Taxidermy is typically labeled with a tag around the leg, and also the mount support if present.

## PAINTINGS

The back upper right hand corner of a painting is a good place for the number. Large paintings may be marked on diagonal corners.

Artworks are sometimes removed from frames, so the back of the painting support is the best location for marking. Select a section of the wooden stretcher or strainer, plain wood if available.

Avoid touching the back of the canvas corresponding to the painted area. Label the rigid edges or backing board if the support is not visible.

Apply base coat of B-72, paper label, top coat

In addition, use a paper tag attached to the screw eye, D-ring or other hanging hardware. This allows a painting to be identified without excessive handling.

Collector and exhibition labeling/ marking on paintings has a long and important tradition. Avoid removing old labels from the backs of paintings.

## TEXTILES and GARMENTS

For textiles robust enough and large enough to hold a label, a sewn technique with Tyvek and white cotton thread is recommended.

Garments are typically labeled where a manufacturer's label might be found, such as at the back of a neck or the waistband. Labeling diagonal corners is helpful for large rolled textiles.

Choose a location that can be hidden during exhibit or photography.

Cut a piece of Tyvek, write the number by hand with a Zig Millenium fade-proof and waterproof pen in the center, leaving room for stitches at each end.

Use seams and original stitch holes whenever possible. Second best is to pass the needle between the weave without piercing the yarns.

Stitch the label with a loop through two holes at each end so minimal snips are needed for removal. Sharp needles work well to pierce Tyvek, while ballpoint needles are less likely to damage the textile fibers.

## PLASTIC

Many kinds of plastic are vulnerable to the solvent acetone used in B-72 labeling adhesive, so this adhesive should not be used. Some older plastics are sensitive to water-based adhesives.

It can be difficult to identify specific plastics. Rubber, vinyl, plastics, and synthetic materials should be marked with great caution as removal can cause damage.

Adhered labels often pop off of flexible plastics.

Many plastic items are connected to composite objects with other parts that may be labeled instead.

For a completely plastic object, the most conservative recommendation is to only use a paper tag with a labeled bag/ box as redundancy. Enclosures also reduce handling, and many plastics age poorly so the less handling the better.

Some museums use water-based acrylic adhesive labels, or B-67 in petroleum distillates, but removal of these labels is not risk-free.

## RESOURCES

### **Fisher Scientific:**

<http://www.fishersci.com/>

acetone, dropper bottle, scissors,  
tweezers

### **Hollinger/ Metal Edge:**

<http://www.hollingermetaledge.com/>

Blue photo pencils, interleaving tissue  
For printing thin paper pabels

### **Marker Supply:**

<http://www.markersupply.com/>

Zig Millenium pens

### **Talas:**

<http://www.talasonline.com/>

B-72 adhesive

For everything else, there's Amazon.com

## STONE

Typically, the underside of a stone item is labeled. If the stone item is very heavy, the "back" may be labeled instead.

Locate a smooth area that is not flaking, powdery or decorated. Porous or rough surfaces are difficult to label. Avoid use edges of stone tools.

Choose a location that will not show during exhibit or photography.

Apply base coat of B-72, paper label, top coat

Use paper tag, labeled bag/ box as redundancy and to reduce handling.

## KIT CONTENTS

Acetone in dropper bottle  
Cotton swabs  
Funnel, mini for transfer of adhesive  
Needles, assorted  
Paraloid B-72 adhesive in acetone  
Pen, Zig Millenium for writing on tags and Tyvek  
Pencil, #2 for marking paper, books, tags  
Photo Pencil, for marking plastic photos  
Polish bottle with brush lid for B-72  
Scissors  
Tags, small acid-free paper (white cotton string)  
Thread, white cotton  
Tweezers  
Tyvek, for labeling textiles  
White vinyl eraser

Separate folder of thin labeling paper

**Kit and manual designed by Ellen Carrlee  
Conservator, Alaska State Museums, 2011**

**Questions? Comments? Ideas?  
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## PHOTOS

Number is usually applied to the back upper right hand corner, in a non-image area along the edge.

For paper, apply number with a #2 or HB pencil, taking care not to press hard enough to make indentations. Write on a firm surface.

For photos made of plastic, use the blue photo pencil.

Sometimes, the right amount of dullness on a graphite pencil will also work on plastic but care must be taken not to scratch the plastic. If the plastic has oily fingerprints, plasticizers, or coatings, pencil will not work well.

Use a labeled enclosure such as a bag or folder as redundancy and to reduce handling.

## WOOD

Wood items are often painted, varnished or otherwise coated. Avoid applying a label to those areas and seek out an inner, underside, or back surface that is bare wood.

Locate a smooth area that is not rough, splintery, or decorated.

Choose a location that will not show during exhibit or photography.

Apply base coat of B-72, paper label, top coat

#2 or HB pencil may also be used on wood if the number can be applied without denting the wood and if it may be removed again with an eraser. Pencil, however, tends to be harder to read.

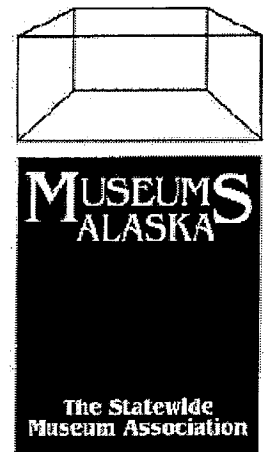
Use paper tag, labeled bag/ box as redundancy and to reduce handling.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. Will applying this label cause damage such as new holes or dissolving the surface?
2. Will future removal of this label cause damage?
3. Will the labeling materials run, fade, abrade, corrode, or age in a way that will damage the artifact?
4. Is the label readable?
5. Is it easy to find the label without having to handle the object a lot?
6. Is it easy to hide the label during exhibition or photography? Is the label ugly?
7. What will happen if the label gets wet?
8. Is the label likely to come off with normal handling, rubbing, or abrasion?
9. Is there a compelling and urgent reason to remove any existing labels that may be important to the history of the item?

# COLLECTIONS LABELING KIT

ALASKA  
STATE  
MUSEUMS



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