

National Museums Liverpool guidelines on marking and labelling methods and positions

Some general rules

- For composite objects choose the least porous surface
- Number all of the parts if an object might be dismantled
- If in doubt use a Tie-on label

HARD NON-POROUS - Glass, glazed pottery, metal

Mark with a pigment based marker or pen, or acrylic paint, with an acrylic varnish layer over it. A varnish layer beneath is advised.

HARD POROUS - wood, terracotta, bone

Mark with an acrylic varnish layer, then pigment based marker or pen, or acrylic paint, and an acrylic varnish layer over it.

PAINTED, VARNISHED WAX OR LACQUERED SURFACES AND PLASTICS

Special care needed - they may be damaged by the materials used for numbering

PAPER

Mark with a pencil (B or HB).

Contact paper conservator for advice on photographs.

Archaeology

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Archaeological metals- wet	Select a position according to object	Permanent ink on Tyvek label
Archaeological wood - wet	Within polythene bag containing object	Permanent ink on Tyvek label
Sherds (ceramic)	Undecorated surface not on fracture break	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Archaeological wood - dry	Select a position according to object	Permanent ink on Tyvek label

Archaeological bone or ivory	Select a position according to object	Permanent ink on Tie-on label
Archaeological metals - dry	If very friable mark container	Permanent ink on Tyvek label

Art collections, frames, sculpture

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Frames for oil paintings, textiles, prints, drawings & watercolours	Gummed label attached to upper right corner of frame backboard overlapping gummed sealing tape if present. Loan labels may also be attached to backboard.	Carbon based ink on paper label
Framed prints, drawings, watercolours	Mark the stretcher and the frame on the top left-hand corner at the back	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Framed oil paintings	Mark the stretcher and the frame on the top left-hand corner at the back	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Prints, drawings, watercolours, mounts	On reverse, lower left corner. Leave 5mm gap from left + lower edges. Only mark paper over a hard, clean surface. Do not press hard, especially with soft paper. Don't turn items over if pigments damaged or friable, especially gouache and pastel.	HB or B graphite pencil
Sculpture, especially stone	Base or back	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Stone sculpture	Base, avoiding foot (reverse	Paraloid B72 + black or white

	side if base inaccessible)	drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Oil paintings Unframed	On stretcher. Unframed panels are left unmarked	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67, and OR glue-on label
Miniatures	Upper right corner of backboard if present. Avoid overlapping frame seal. If no clear, separate backboard attach to storage enclosure/envelope only	Carbon based ink or graphite on small photographic quality gummed paper label

Basketry

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Basketry	Around handle or loop through basketry if weave is open enough, otherwise write on inside edge or base	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 OR Tie-on label

Bird and mammal specimens

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Bird and mammal specimens (mounted)	Underside of base for mounted specimens, otherwise on a label attached to the horns, antlers or legs by thread	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 OR Tie-on label
Bird eggs	Label in tray	Tie-on label
Bird skins	Label attached to dowel support and feet or to feet if no dowel support	Pencil or ink on acid free card or Tyvek
Fluid-preserved specimens	Inside container, against glass so they can be read	Graphite pencil or carbon based ink only on

	from outside, or self-adhesive label stuck on outside	conservation quality paper
Mammal skins Flat-mounted	On the card which supports the skins	Carbon based ink
Bird and mammal specimens (mounted)	Underside of base for mounted specimens, otherwise on a label attached to the horns, antlers or legs by thread	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 OR Tie-on label
Bird eggs	Label in tray	Tie-on label
Bird skins	Label attached to dowel support and feet or to feet if no dowel support	Pencil or ink on acid free card or Tyvek
Fluid-preserved specimens	Inside container, against glass so they can be read from outside, or self-adhesive label stuck on outside	Graphite pencil or carbon based ink only on conservation quality paper
Mammal skins Flat-mounted	On the card which supports the skins	Carbon based ink

Bone and ivory

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Bone and ivory specimens and artefacts (sound)	On flat surface, under base or on back	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Ivory artefacts and specimens (with good surface)	On flat surface, under base or on back	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 and/OR Tie-on label

Botanical specimens

Botanical collections: “open”

Object Type	Where and how to mark
Timbers	printed labels attached direct to upper side
Plant models	Original manufacturer’s labels adhered to upper side of base.
Library	Metal backed computer generated self- adhesive labels * applied on base of spine, pencil annotation inside front cover

Botanical collections: boxed specimens

Object Type	Where and how to mark
Economic specimens	computer generated self adhesive labels *, outside of box, usually underside.
Lichens	computer generated labels on acid free paper *, adhered with SCMC.
Macro fungi	computer generated labels on acid free paper *, + pencilled tie-on tag round stem for freeze-drying.
Carpological (seeds)	computer generated labels on acid free paper, adhered with SCMC to outside of box.
Exsiccate	volumes placed within archive boxes, box spines labelled.
Prints & drawings	see Prints, drawings, and watercolours.
Archives	marked with pencil - see Archives, (single sheets) and Books

Ceramics and clay pipes

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Ceramic vessels and ornaments	Base, avoiding foot (reverse side if base inaccessible)	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Clay pipes	Bowl bottom or, if broken, on pipe stem as well	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67

Coins and medals

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Coins and medals	Edge (exergue) or verso alternatively box or container	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67

Furniture, wood, mirrors

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Clocks	Longcase: Trunk, hinge jamb near top, inside door in same position. Hood, on mask on hinge side near top (hidden when door closed), inside door in same position Bracket/pediment: Back, top right corner Free standing clocks: Clocks with feet, inside right back	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67

	foot as long as it can be seen without lifting clock. If not on back, near base, right	
Furniture	<p>Tables, cabinets, commodes: Back at top right corner (upper section, if present, back, lower right corner).</p> <p>Chairs: back seat rail, centre of inside face.</p> <p>Drop-in seats: back rail, centre of front face.</p> <p>Drawers: Back, outside face of backboard, right.</p> <p>Lids: Jamb or lip, inside, right</p>	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Mirrors	If freestanding, reverse side; side of mount if wall-mounted	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Wooden objects, miscellaneous	Mark unpainted wood, underside, back, or inside edge	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Boxes	<p>Small: On base, right back corner.</p> <p>Large: Hinge jamb of lid and body, right corner</p>	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67

Glass, metal and jewellery

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Glass and enamels	Lower back or under the foot	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Stained glass	Mark as glass and enamels, on glass rather than leading	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid

		B67
Glass, crizzled (for miniatures and cased photographs (Consult a conservator asap)	A small sound area, or mark container. Avoid consolidating glass	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Metal vessels and sculpture	Base or back	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Silver & base metal collections	As metal vessels and sculpture, i.e. base or back	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 and/OR tie-on label
Jewellery, precious, not plastic	Edge or verso. Alternatively box or container, or tie-on label.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.

Leather

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Leather objects with smooth firm surface (not books)	Underside or back	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Leather, soft suede or napped, and un-tanned or semi-tanned skin	Loop through existing hole or mark container/packaging	Tie-on acid free card or Tyvek label, permanent ink.

Minerals and fossils

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Minerals, rocks and fossils	Matrix (or the 'poorest side' of specimens without matrix)	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 Perm ink on acid free paper secured with Paraloid B72 or painted no on outside of tube or plastic container

Minerals: Crystals	With number on label inside glass tube, painted number on outside of glass tube or plastic box, or label on specimen matrix or base.	Carbon based ink on acid free paper secured to matrix/base with Paraloid B72
Sub fossil bone/shells	On underside or matrix Or painted no on outside of tube or plastic container	Acid free paper label perm ink, secured with starch paste

Musical instruments, toys and dolls

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Musical instruments	On back of case or frame, underside of object, bare metal part if possible	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 AND tie-on label
Toys and dolls	Back of shoulder plate/back of doll: underside/back of toy. Mark clothes as for costume.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 and Tie-on label, or sewn on label if appropriate

Paper, photographs and books

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Archives – single sheets, ephemera	Reverse, lower left corner.	HB or B graphite pencil
Books, albums, sketchbooks	n inside of each cover; if decorated, on first plain page. Use book supports where possible, avoid pressure on oints	HB or B graphite pencil only
Photographs (all types: prints, negatives, glass slides)	Mark enclosure (without photo inside/underneath) rather than photo.	Method depends on nature of enclosure. Consult a paper or photograph

	<p>If framed, see frames.</p> <p>If small cased photographs, see Miniatures</p>	conservator if in doubt.
Glass, crizzled (for miniatures and cased photographs (Consult a conservator asap)	A small sound area, or mark container. Avoid consolidating glass	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67

Plastic, wax and lacquer

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Plastic objects (not photographs)	Under base, or back, depending on object	Tie-on label or soft pencil. DO NOT USE Paraloid, ink or paint.
Wax objects	Depends on object	Use Tie-on label or mark container DO NOT USE Paraloid solutions as they will dissolve the wax
Lacquer, Oriental and European	Mark only on un-lacquered surface, or use Tie-on label	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67.

Shells and insects

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Shells, conchology collections	Label in tray	Tie-on label
Insect collections	On card, mounted on the pin	Pencil or ink

Textiles and other costume

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Costume	Back of neckband or waistband, near the opening	Sewn-on label and/or Tie-on label
Costume accessories: Shoes	On the sole, under the instep	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 OR tie-on label
Costume accessories: Bags and purses	Inside, near the opening	Sewn-on label and/OR Tie-on label
Costume accessories: Gloves and stockings	Inside the welt or cuff	Sewn-on label
Curtains, tapestries, banners and draperies	If hanging: On reverse side, usually lower right hand corner. If rolled add labels which can be seen without unrolling.	Sewn-on label, 25mm width for larger textiles
Rugs, tapestries and carpets	Reverse side, on two diagonally opposite corners if large	Sewn-on label, 25 mm width if large
Textile fragments	Loop through existing hole, on folder or box for very fragile pieces	Tyvek label on fine loop of thread, pencil on card, or marker pen on box.
Textiles and embroideries	On the reverse at the corner	Sewn-on label and/OR Tie-on label

Tools, machinery, vehicles, boats

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Tools	Near the handle junction, on metal part if there is one.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67

Ship models	Discretely, or on crate or case	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Ships and boats	Bow, bottom of stem	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 OR Paint
Machinery and equipment	Right hand side, low down	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 OR Paint OR tie-on label
Land Transport, vehicles	Inside driver-side door/right hand side	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67 OR Paint.

Weapons, armour and powder horns

Object Type	Where to mark	How to mark
Weapons: Edged weapons (swords and bayonets)	Blade, below hilt and ricasso. Scabbard, back of top mount	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Weapons: Long arms and handguns (rifles, muskets, pistols, revolvers)	Preferably on trigger guard mount, or other metal part rather than wood.	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Weapons: ordnance	On base on bare metal	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Weapons: pole weapons (halberds, lances, pikes, clubs, maces, spears)	Preferably on bare metal	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Armour, helmets	Inside rim if bare metal, or tie-on label	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid B67
Powder horns and flasks	Back edge near opening, or under base	Paraloid B72 + black or white drawing ink + Paraloid

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