

SCIENCE FAIR CENTRAL

HELPFUL HINTS

How to Create a Winning Display

Treat the center panel of the tri-fold board as center stage. This is where the story of the experiment or investigation should be chronicled in precise steps.

Before you shop for supplies or pick up a single marker or piece of construction paper, review the official guidelines for your science fair. Some guidelines specify exact dimensions of display boards or require certain category headings; others are less strict.

Read these Helpful Hints for tips on getting started. Learn how to edit your text down to the essentials, pick and choose the best photos and graphics, and display them all in the most clear and compelling way possible. Through creative use of color, type, and graphic elements, you can make your ideas pop and bring your project to life.

Helpful Hints for Science Fair Project Displays

Preparation

- **Leave yourself plenty of time:** two weeks between collecting data and the presentation.
- **Consult a book or website about graphic design.** See how professionals use a grid format with columns and rows for effective layouts. Evaluate how their design allows for beautiful and functional transmission of light
- **Study examples of winning displays** in science fair books for ideas.

Getting Started

- **For any drawings or written text,** start with pencil, not pen. Consult a book or website about graphic



design. See how professionals use a grid format with columns and rows for effective layouts. Evaluate how their design allows for beautiful and functional transmission of light

- **Sketch a rough layout** on a piece of paper before pasting up your display.
- **Gather all of your material and organize it** into categories.
- **Include photographs if you can.** If you forgot to take pictures, restage the project and take them now.
- **Come up with a catchy title** and display it prominently.
- **Include all required categories** and content on your display.
- **Keep things on the board in a logical sequence** – the order in which you did them – to tell the story of your project.

Making the Display

- **Space elements evenly across your layout,** to achieve a balanced, consistent look.
- **Draw attention to the most interesting parts** of your project with color and graphics.
- **Use no more than two or three complimentary colors** for background and text.
- **Use black or dark colors for type.**
- **Make type large enough to read from four feet away:** As a general rule, use 24 pt type for headings, 16 pt type for text blocks.
- **The title should be the largest text on the board.** Don't be afraid to make it big and bold!
- **Choose a simple font that is easy to read.** Easy to read fonts include: Arial, Comic Sans, Tahoma, Verdana
- **Use subheads and bullet points rather than long paragraphs** of dense text.
- **Mount black-and-white text blocks on colored construction paper** for contrast. It's like framing a picture.
- **Avoid using white school glue to stick thin paper to your board.** It can easily wrinkle.
- **Use Scotch Removable Tape and Restickable Glue Sticks** to paste items on your display and play around with the layout. You'll have greater artistic freedom and avoid frustration!
- **Label all graphs, charts and tables.** On graphs, make sure you label the x and y axes.
- **Be sure every photo has a caption beneath it.** Write descriptive captions for photos.
- **Proofread,** spell-check all text before sticking it on your display board.
- **Print on thick paper,** like cover stock, if possible.
- **Use a ruler, yardstick or T-square** to measure and cut evenly.
- **Avoid writing or drawing directly on the board.** There is no way to cleanly erase it.



- **Leave some “white space”** between text boxes and graphics.
- **For any 3-D objects: wait until you transport the board to the fair** and glue them on there.
- **If you need electricity for your project** (such as a light for plants), ask for it ahead of time.

At the Science Fair

- **Pack a box of supplies** to keep handy for last-minute repairs at the fair.
- **Dress neatly** – what’s called “business casual.” You’re not expected to wear a three-piece suit, but shoot for neat and conservative to be safe.
- **Avoid eating or chewing anything.** A bottle of water is o.k.
- **If you have a cell phone, leave it at home or in your locker.**
- **Smile, look visitors and judges in the eye,** be polite, and thank the judges for their time.

