

Judging Science Fairs: (from California State Science Fair www.usc.edu/CSSF/Judges/GoodJudge.html and Science Buddies www.sciencebuddies.org/science-fair-projects/Teacher_ScienceFairGuide_Judging.pdf)

Determining the Winners

You can use a few simple criteria for selecting the winners:

- The quality of the student's work is what matters, not the amount of work;
- Team projects are judged like other projects -- it is the quality of the work that matters (an individual project of equal quality to that of a team project may be ranked higher because of the comparatively greater effort required by the individual);
- A less sophisticated project that the student understands gets higher marks than a more sophisticated project that is not understood;
- Access to sophisticated lab equipment and endorsements from professionals do not guarantee a high quality project (Did the student really understand what was going on?)
- It's okay if the student ended up disproving the objective or hypothesis of the experiment.
- The project clearly demonstrates the use and understanding of the scientific method.

High marks go to:

- Genuine scientific breakthroughs
- Discovering knowledge not readily available to the student
- Correctly interpreting data
- A clever experimental apparatus
- Repetitions to verify experimental results
- Predicting and/or reducing experimental results with analytical techniques
- In engineering categories, experiments applicable to the "real world"
- Ability to clearly portray and explain the project and its results

Low marks go to:

- Ignoring readily available information (e.g. not doing basic library research)
- An apparatus (e.g. model) not useful for experimentation and data collection

- Improperly using jargon, not understanding terminology, and/or not knowing how equipment or instrumentation works
- Presenting results that were not derived from experimentation (e.g. literature search)