

SUGGESTIONS FOR JUDGES

Hawaii State Science and Engineering Fair

The Purpose of Science Fairs

A science and engineering fair is a competition based on the quality of projects done by students, the results of which are presented through exhibits at the fair. The purpose of the fair is to stimulate in young people an active interest in science and engineering, to provide an educational experience through being exposed to the judges and the public; and to give public recognition to talented students for the work they have done.

Importance of Judges

The success or failure of any science and engineering fair depends to a large extent upon the quality of judging. It is, therefore, vitally important for each judge to understand thoroughly the duties and obligations of judging.

Judging Hints

- Take a little time to survey all the projects in your division before starting on the evaluation of specific projects assigned to you. The purpose of this survey is to get an idea of what the general run of exhibits is like, and make some estimate of the overall quality in other categories. A good time to survey all the projects in your division is on preview day (Monday evening), as time can be short on judging day (Tuesday).
- We are judging the quality of work done on the project, and how well the student understands the area they have been working in. Only secondarily are we evaluating the physical display.
- Do not fill out your rating sheets in front of the students or discuss projects with other judges while students are present.

Interviewing

Keep in mind the Science Fair is not only a competition but also an educational and motivating experience. Students say they enjoy talking to judges and that, in many cases, it is the high point of their experience at the fair.

- Each student will be interviewed by as many judges as possible. Evaluation of the exhibit by itself is not adequate. Only by extensive questioning can a judge obtain a good grasp of what the student has done and what he/she knows about the subject.
- An individual judge should do interviewing instead of a group of judges, so students are not intimidated. The opportunity for personal contact between the student and the judge is important for both project evaluation and educational experience.
- An interview should last about 10 minutes. (Some judges may have more projects to judge than others depending on the number of projects we get each year.) Even if the student is not in the running for an award, he/she should be talked to for the educational experience involved.
- In addition to substantive questions, ask about what kind of assistance was received, how the student got their idea for the project, where the work was done, etc. (See Judging Criteria for other ideas for questions).

- Judges are encouraged to talk to students as much as possible but not at the expense of other judges. The student needs a required number of interviews, and other judges may be waiting to interview the student. Judges can help by notifying the category head judge or the judging coordinator if a student needs more interviews.

Project Divisions

Projects at the school, district, and state fairs may be divided into two project categories: Research and Display.

Research projects are those involving laboratory, field or theoretical work and not just library research.

Display projects explain or demonstrate a scientific principle or problem, usually involving library research. At the State Fair, only research projects are accepted in the Senior Division (grades 9-12). The Junior Division (grades 6-8) consists of both Research and Display projects.