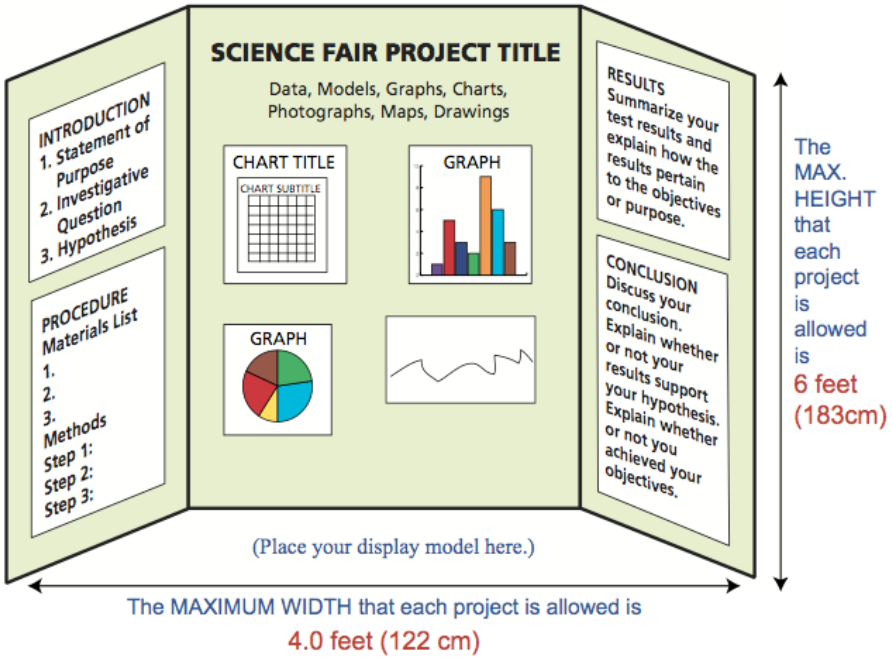
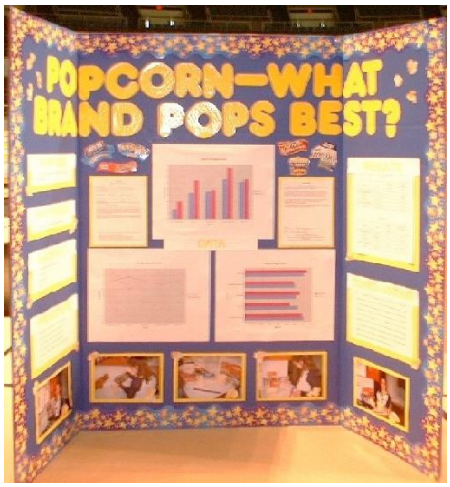
Tips on Display Boards, Notebooks, and Interviewing

At the science fair, the display is the focal point of each project and contains all of the information about the project. Below is a sketch and an actual sample of how information is presented on a typical display.



Sketch of the components of a display board presentation.



An example of a science fair project display.

Jackson School Science Fair Tips

Some Helpful Hints on Presentation Boards:

- **Presentation boards** are readily available at most office supply stores (Dollar Tree, Staples, Office Depot). A standard size is 36" tall by 48" wide (folds in three panels to 36" tall by 24" wide). Of course, homemade ones will work just as well, made from a large cardboard box. Extra boards will be available in the office if needed.
- Use **pictures and drawings** to help the audience understand the experiment.
- **Be Organized**. Using our sketch above as a guide will help to organize the information so that the audience can quickly follow the thread of the experiment by glancing at the board. **Every chart, graph, and picture should be clearly labeled with titles, headings, and units of measure**.
- **A Good Title**. The title is the attention grabber. Pick something that is catchy, while accurately summarizing the research. The title should be big and easily read from at least three feet away.
- **Eye-Catching**. Use colorful headings, charts, and graphs to present the project. Using similar font families and colored backgrounds can further help to group the information and organize the display.
- **Proofread.** Carefully review all of the materials put on your display board.
- **Neatness counts**. Make sure anything on the board that is handwritten is neat and legible and the board is constructed as neatly as possible.
- **Don't forget the table space**. There is more than just the backboard display to show off the project. Use the table space to display the project notebook, research papers, and any appropriate models.
- <u>Check that the display board contains the following (as appropriate):</u>
    - Title
    - Introduction
        - Statement of Purpose
        - Investigative Question
        - Hypothesis
    - Procedure
        - Materials
        - Step-By-Step Instructions
    - Data - Chart(s) and Graph(s)
    - Discussion of Results
    - Conclusion
    - Bibliography – include if you used a website, book, or other source to do this project

Keeping a Notebook

Use a durable notebook or black and white composition book. These can be found at Dollar Tree or any office supply store mentioned above. There will be a few extras in the office if you need one. Typically a lined journal works great. Spiral bound notebooks tend not to hold up over the course of your experiment. Papers are too easily removed or torn from them, and before you realize it, important items are missing. Loose papers are a disaster waiting to happen for a scientist.

Here are some helpful hints for keeping a notebook (only needed for the judged entries):

- **Label your lab notebook** with your project title, your name(s), and teacher's name in a prominent location. Make lab notebook entries in **pen** not in pencil. This is a permanent record of all of your activities associated with your project.
- **Number the pages** in your lab notebook before using it, unless already numbered for you.
- **Always date every entry**, just like a journal. Entries should be brief and concise. Full sentences are not required.
- **Don't worry about neatness**. It's a personal record of your work. Do not redo your lab notebook because it looks sloppy. Think of the lab notebook as your "Dear Diary" for science fair. It's not just for recording data during the experimental phase of your project.
- **The notebook should be used during all phases of your project**: jotting down ideas or thoughts for a project, phone numbers, contacts or sources and prices of supplies, book references, diagrams, graphs, figures, charts, sketches, or calculations.
- **Log entries should include**: your brainstorming, calculations, library/internet searches, phone calls, interviews, meetings with mentors or advisors, notes from tours of laboratories, research facilities and other related activities. Remember that it's documentation of your work.
- **Glue, staple or tape any loose papers, photocopies of important items.** Loose papers or other unsecured items are prohibited since they tend to fall out and can end up missing.
- **Include a reflections section in your lab notebook**. For example, what, if anything would I do differently next time? What part of the experiment could be changed to improve the experimental procedure? In many cases, this is part of the conclusion.

- **Always include any changes** made to procedures, mishaps, failures, or mistakes. Sometimes the best discoveries are due to a mistake or failure of an experiment.
- **Include any and all observations made during your experiment**. In other words, record ALL data directly in your lab notebook. If that is not possible, then attach photocopies of data in the lab notebook.

Remember, keeping up a great lab notebook throughout the entire duration of the science project really pays off later! Not only will a nicely maintained lab notebook impress the judges at the fair, it will also help you stay out of trouble later when you need to look back and provide details of what you did.

Preparing for the Interviewers

The interviewers (judges) will be interested in hearing how well the participants can discuss their project with others. In particular, they want to see that participants can clearly and briefly discuss their project's purpose, procedure, results, and conclusion. The best way to prepare for the interview is to create a brief presentation and practice it as often as possible. Having friends and family ask questions about the project is also good practice.

Some examples of questions the interviewers may ask are:

- Why did you choose this topic?
- How long did it take you to do the experiment?
- How did you make your apparatus?
- How does your apparatus work?
- Did you take all the data under the same conditions?
- What sources of errors are there?
- If you did this experiment again, what would you do differently?
- What is the next step to continue this work?

For more information go to: http://www.jacksonedhpto.org