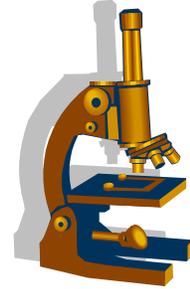


General Science Fair Information

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"E" IS FOR EXCELLENCE

Here are a few tips for doing a prize winning experiment:

- Perform your test more than once to be sure that your results are accurate. Repeat the test exactly. Each repeat is called a trial. Record the results of each trial separately.
- Keep a careful and accurate log. For each trial, record the date and time and any measurements, observations or results, as well as any comments, you have.
- Take pictures of noticeable changes that take place during the experiment
- Be sure you don't gather only those results that say your hypothesis is correct. Finding the real answer is more important than proving your hypothesis is true.

SAFETY FIRST!

- No matter what kind of experiment you do, it's very important to always follow a few safety rules:
- Before performing an experiment, plan it carefully with your teacher and parent. Decide together whether the adult should be there during the experiment. If the experiment calls for something electrical, hot or sharp, an adult **MUST** be present.
- Know your tools and ingredients. Have each ready before you begin.
- Tie back long hair in a ponytail or pin it up.
- Keep your work area clean and dry. If necessary, cover surfaces with newspaper.
- Never put an unknown material in your mouth or eyes.
- Never use electrical appliances near water.
- Ask for help if something unexpected happens.
- Wash your hands after the experiment.
- Never, ever, do harm to a living thing.

HOW TO KNOW IF IT'S A GOOD PROJECT.

1. Is it something that interests you?
2. Can you do an experiment on this topic to find the answer to a question?
 - This project isn't a demonstration or report - they don't use the scientific method.
 - A diagram or model of something isn't an experiment.
 - Can you get the materials and equipment needed and complete the project by the due date?
 - Can you do the experiment with only a little help from your parents or teachers?
 - Can you complete the experiment by the due date?

3. Does the level of the project match your ability?

- The projects which attract the most attention are original.
- Can you find background research materials on your topic?

DO'S AND DON'TS

Do use computer-generated graphs.

Do display photos representing the procedure and the results.

Do use contrasting colors.

Do limit the number of colors used.

Do display models when applicable. If possible, make the models match the color scheme of the backboard.

Do attach charts neatly. If there are many, place them on top of each other so that the top chart can be lifted to reveal the ones below.

Do balance the arrangement of materials on the backboard. This means evenly distributing the materials on the board so that they cover about the same amount of space on each panel.

Do use rubber cement or double-sided tape to attach papers. White school glue causes the paper to wrinkle.

Don't leave large empty spaces on the backboard.

Don't leave the table in front of the backboard empty. Display your models (if any), report, copies of your abstract, and your journal here.

Don't hang electrical equipment on the backboard so that the electric cord runs down the front of the backboard.

Don't make the title or headings hard to read by using uneven lettering, words with letters of different colors, or disorganized placement of materials.

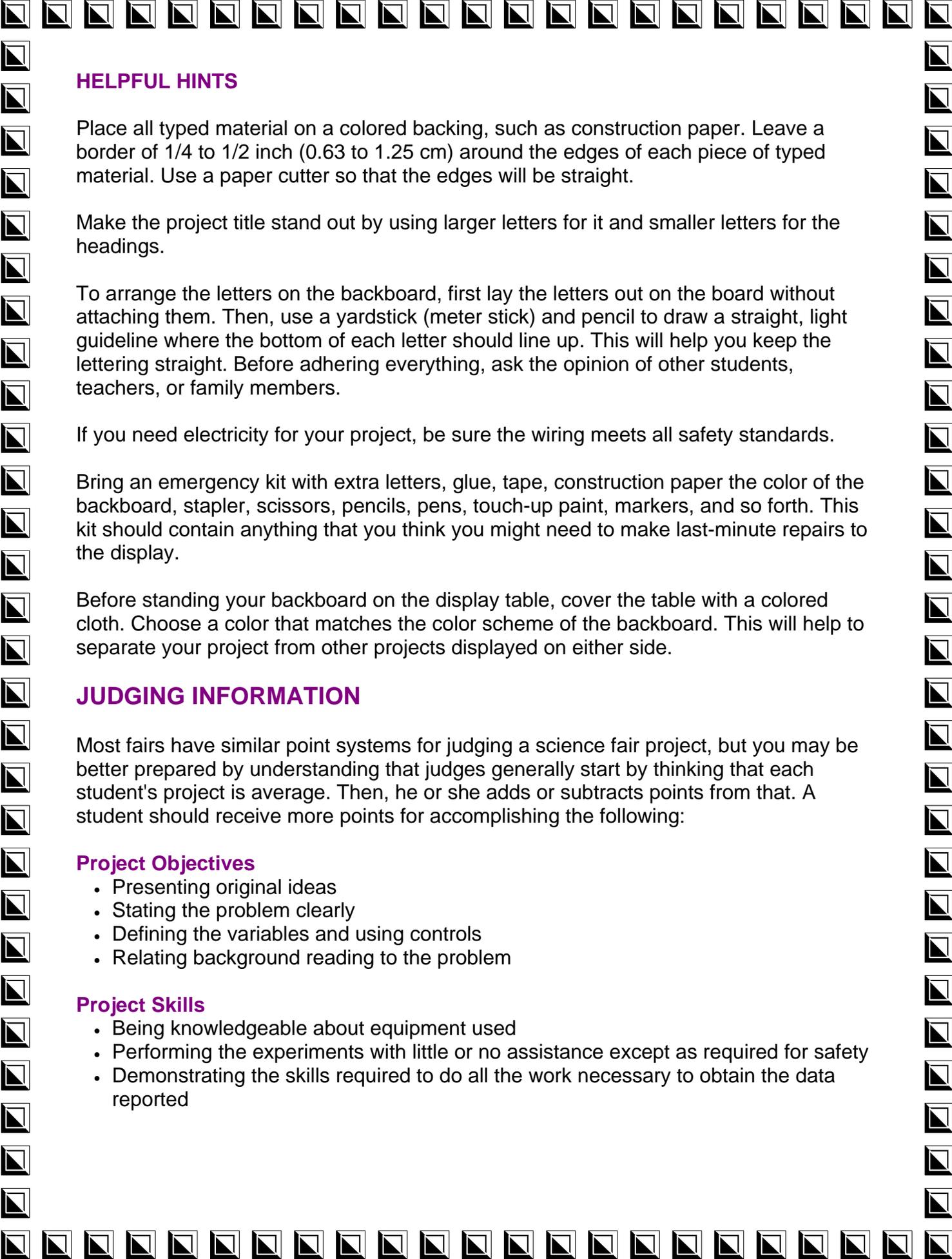
Don't hand-print the letters on the backboard.

Don't attach folders that fall open on the backboard.

Don't make mistakes in spelling words or writing formulas.



Figure 7.2: Example of a Bad Display



HELPFUL HINTS

Place all typed material on a colored backing, such as construction paper. Leave a border of 1/4 to 1/2 inch (0.63 to 1.25 cm) around the edges of each piece of typed material. Use a paper cutter so that the edges will be straight.

Make the project title stand out by using larger letters for it and smaller letters for the headings.

To arrange the letters on the backboard, first lay the letters out on the board without attaching them. Then, use a yardstick (meter stick) and pencil to draw a straight, light guideline where the bottom of each letter should line up. This will help you keep the lettering straight. Before adhering everything, ask the opinion of other students, teachers, or family members.

If you need electricity for your project, be sure the wiring meets all safety standards.

Bring an emergency kit with extra letters, glue, tape, construction paper the color of the backboard, stapler, scissors, pencils, pens, touch-up paint, markers, and so forth. This kit should contain anything that you think you might need to make last-minute repairs to the display.

Before standing your backboard on the display table, cover the table with a colored cloth. Choose a color that matches the color scheme of the backboard. This will help to separate your project from other projects displayed on either side.

JUDGING INFORMATION

Most fairs have similar point systems for judging a science fair project, but you may be better prepared by understanding that judges generally start by thinking that each student's project is average. Then, he or she adds or subtracts points from that. A student should receive more points for accomplishing the following:

Project Objectives

- Presenting original ideas
- Stating the problem clearly
- Defining the variables and using controls
- Relating background reading to the problem

Project Skills

- Being knowledgeable about equipment used
- Performing the experiments with little or no assistance except as required for safety
- Demonstrating the skills required to do all the work necessary to obtain the data reported

Data Collection

- Using a journal to collect data and research
- Repeating the experiment to verify the results
- Spending an appropriate amount of time to complete the project
- Having measurable results

Data Interpretation

- Using tables, graphs, and illustrations in interpreting data
- Using research to interpret data collected
- Collecting enough data to make a conclusion
- Using only data collected to make a conclusion

Project Presentation (Written Materials, Interviews, Displays)

- Having a complete and comprehensive report
- Answering questions accurately
- Using the display during oral presentation
- Justifying conclusions on the basis of experimental data
- Summarizing what was learned
- Presenting a display that shows creative ability and originality
- Presenting an attractive and interesting display



sources: <http://www2.sd43.bc.ca/summit/114staffweb/lessons/sciencefair/>
<http://school.discovery.com/sciencefaircentral/scifairstudio/handbook/index.html>