

HOW TO DO WELL IN A SCIENCE FAIR

1. Find something that you wonder about. It must be something you don't yet know but that you find fascinating. If you are not learning anything new, you are doing the research for the wrong reason.
2. Once you have an idea for a research topic, look at the judging form. Start with Part A. The whole page looks complicated, but it is not really. Grades 1 to 6 students must decide whether their project is science or technology. Ask a teacher for help with the definitions. Grades 7 to 12 students must decide whether they are going to do an experiment, an innovation or a study. Keep the definition in mind throughout your project. The Levels below your choice give an excellent idea of what the judges will be looking for.
3. Start a journal. Each time you do some work, write down the date and a brief description of what you did and what happened. Start a new entry every time you work on your project. Record the failures as well as the successes. It is often wise to take pictures of your progress. Projects involving plants, for example, look much different by the time the Western Manitoba Fair comes along than they did for the school fair. For the Western Manitoba Fair pictures are much better than the actual plants.
4. Once your project is well underway, refer to the rest of the judging form often to keep yourself on track. Part B has to do with original creativity. Good scientists take a creative approach to problems to find new solutions. Try to work toward a higher rank because the marks are higher.
5. As the fair approaches, decide what type of display you are going to need. Be sure that it meets the size limits. Remember that the display is only 20% of the total mark.
6. Prepare for your interview with the judges. They will want to know whether you understand your project. The judging form gives some good guidelines.
7. All grade 7 to 12 projects must submit a one page abstract with their entry form. The judges get this before fair day. It is worth 10% of your final mark. Entries without a summary are at a real disadvantage. A good summary sets out the purpose of the project, a summary of what happened and a brief conclusion.

Be sure you enjoy the experience.