Scoring Guidelines

You should rely on the judging scorecard to provide a framework for consistent scoring. Also, please make sure you've carefully evaluated the expectations chart above so you are able to base your scoring on what is age-appropriate.

General Scoring:

- The project should demonstrate the use and understanding of the scientific method. While the neatness and organization of the display is important and scored separately, using the scientific method is most important.
- The project should focus on experimentation, not just library research or gadgetry.
- The quality of the student's work is what matters, not the amount of work.
- Do not count it against the student if he or she ended up disproving the objective or hypothesis. Though it might technically be a negative result, the project and process the student went through could still be considered a success.
- State-of-the-art lab equipment does not guarantee the students' understanding of the experiment.

High Scores Should Go to the Following:

- A project that demonstrates the student's full understanding. A simple project that the student understands should receive a higher score than a more sophisticated project that the student does not understand.
- Scientific advances
- Innovative experimental procedures and/or lab equipment that go above and beyond the original experiment and what is expected for the grade level
- An understanding of concepts above and beyond what their resources might typically have allowed them to discover
- Correctly interpreted data
- Repeated trials to verify results
- Analytical techniques to predict and/or reduce the number of trials required, based on the prediction
- The student's display of the entire experiment and the results

Low Scores Should Go to the Following:

- Apparent lack of research; many resources were readily available to the students throughout the project
- Superfluous lab equipment or displays that do not relate to the experiment or were not aids in collecting data
- Poor understanding of terminology and equipment
- A failure to collect data that relates to the scientific question posed
- Results that are derived from another source (such as literature) and not from student experimentation

(Scoring Guidelines adapted from the University of Southern California's California State Science Fair website: http://www.usc.edu/CSSF/Judges/GoodJudge.html. Accessed: February 8, 2008.)