

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.



Figure 7.2: Example of a Bad Display

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.

The Display

Your science fair display represents all the work that you have done. It should consist of a backboard, the project report, and anything that represents your project, such as models made, items studied, photographs, surveys, and the like. It must tell the story of the project in such a way that it attracts and holds the interest of the viewer. It has to be thorough, but not too crowded, so keep it simple.

The allowable size and shape of the display backboard can vary, so you will have to check the rules for your science fair. Most exhibits are allowed to be 48 inches (122 cm) wide, 30 inches (76 cm) deep, and 108 inches (274 cm) high (including the tables they stand on). These are maximum measurements, so your display may be smaller than this. A three-sided backboard is usually the best way to display your work. Sturdy cardboard or other heavy material is easier to work with and is less likely to be damaged during transportation to the fair. Wooden panels can be cut and hinged together. Some office supply stores sell inexpensive pre-made backboards. If these are not available in your area, you can order inexpensive pre-made backboards from science supply companies. Purchased backboards generally come in two colors, black and white. You can use a different color by covering the backboard with self-stick, colored shelving paper or cloth. For items placed on the backboard, select colors that stand out but don't distract the viewer from the material being presented. For example, if everything is in fluorescent colors, the bright colors, instead of your work, will be what catches the eye.

The title and other headings should be neat and large enough to be read at a distance of about 3 feet (1 m). A short title is often eye-catching. You can purchase, at office supply stores, self-sticking letters of various sizes and colors for the title and headings and stick them to the backboard. You can cut your own letters out of construction paper or stencil the letters for all the headings directly onto the backboard. You can also use a word processor to print the title and other headings.

Some teachers have set rules about the position of the information on the backboard. The following headings are examples: **Problem, Hypothesis, Experiment** (materials and procedure), **Data, Results, Conclusion, and Next Time**. The project title should go at the top of the center panel, and the remaining material needs to be placed neatly in some order. Figure 7.1 shows one way of placing the material. The heading "Next Time," though not always required, may be included if desired. It would follow the conclusion and contain a brief description of plans for future development of the project. You could include this information in the conclusion rather than under a separate heading.

You want a display that the judges will remember positively. So before you glue everything down, lay the board on a flat surface and arrange the materials a few different ways. This will help you decide on the most suitable and attractive presentation. Figure 7.1 shows what a good display might look like.



Figure 7.1: Example of a Good Display