



Northeast Indiana Regional Science and Engineering Fair

Tips for the Best Judges

- **Judges use positive communication and give credit to student for effort.** As a general rule, judges represent professional authority to students. For this reason, judges should use *an encouraging tone* when asking questions, offering suggestions or giving constructive criticism. Judges *should not criticize, treat lightly, or display boredom* toward projects they personally consider unimportant. *Always give credit* to the student for completing a challenging task and/or for their success in previous competitions.
- **Judges encourage students to pursue future exploration.** Judges should keep in mind that competing in a science fair is not only a competition, but *an educational and motivating experience* for the participants. The high point of the fair experience for most of the students is their judging interviews.
- **Judges focus on student knowledge, not just the display.** Examine the quality of the participant's work, and how well she or he understands the project and area of study. The physical display is secondary to the participant's knowledge of the subject.
- **Judges do not rank catchy displays above evidence of research work.** Look for evidence of laboratory, field or theoretical work, not just library research or use of "gadgets".
- **Judges only focus on this year's work, even in a continuing project.** Participants may have worked on a research project for more than one year. However, for the purpose of judging, *only* research conducted within the current year is to be evaluated. Although previous work is important, it should not unduly impact the judging of this year's project.
- **Judges only compare projects at THIS Fair.** Compare projects *only* with those competing at this fair and not with projects seen in other competitions or scholastic events.
- **Judges determine how much is the student's work.** It is important in the evaluation of a project to determine how much guidance was provided to the student in the design and implementation of his or her research. Rather than make an assumption, a judge can ask subtle questions generating answers that may reveal how much work the student did on the project. Parental guidance is acceptable as long as the primary work was the student's work.
- **Judges keep results confidential.** Please *do not reveal any comments* made during deliberations for participant placement to anyone outside of your judging group. Additionally, please avoid discussing projects with others in your judging group in a location where comments might be overheard by students, their parents or teachers. All placement results are confidential until announced at the awards ceremony.
- **Judges do not release students after they have judged them.** The Judge Coordinator will work with the Lead Judges to determine when the students will be released.

Thank you for your assistance and support!