PLANT A QUESTION · HOMESCHOOL SCIENCE FAIR

Judging *Rubric*

Wednesday, March 3, 2027 · Hosted by Bennett Global Academy and Raising Free

Projects in Buds, Blossoms and Oaks are scored out of 100 on five criteria. Seedlings and Sprouts present without judging. This is the rubric every judge uses, so students and parents can see exactly how a project is scored.

AGE BANDS

Who is judged

AGE BAND	AGES	JUDGED?
Seedlings	3 to 5	No. Every young scientist presents and gets a certificate.
Sprouts	5 to 8	No. Every young scientist presents and gets a certificate.
Buds	8 to 11	Yes
Blossoms	11 to 14	Yes
Oaks (high school)	14 to 17	Yes, in person or virtual

A child who is 8, 11 or 14 on January 1, 2027 can enter either band. The parent chooses when registering. Entering the older band means being judged.

SCORING

The five criteria

Judges give each criterion a level from 0 to 4. The level times the multiplier is the points. A project can earn up to 100.

CRITERION	WHAT JUDGES LOOK FOR	MULTIPLIER	MOST POINTS
The question	A question the student wants answered and can test. It is the student's own.	Level × 4	**16**
The test	A fair test: one thing changed, the rest kept the same, tried more than once. Steps another person could follow.	Level × 6	**24**
Data and results	What happened was measured and written down. The data is organized in a table or graph. Surprises are reported, not hidden.	Level × 5	**20**
Conclusion	The conclusion answers the question and points to the data. The student says what they learned and what they would try next.	Level × 5	**20**
Presentation	The display is clear and easy to read. The student explains the project in their own words and answers questions.	Level × 5	**20**
Total			**100**

SCORING

Score levels

LEVEL	NAME	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
4	**Outstanding**	Complete and clear. The student shows real thinking, and the work goes past what is expected for their age.
3	**Strong**	Complete and clear, with small gaps.
2	**Developing**	Some parts are there, but gaps make the project hard to follow.
1	**Beginning**	Only a small part of this criterion is shown.
0	**Not shown**	This criterion is missing.

Example for The test, a student asking which paper towel soaks up the most water:

Level 4: Three brands, the same amount of water, the same size sheet, three trials each, steps written down.

Level 3: Three brands, the same amount of water, one trial each.

Level 2: Brands compared, but the amount of water changed from one to the next.

Level 1: Water poured on one brand.

Level 0: No test described.

SCORING

What changes by age

Judges expect more from older students. The same project can earn a Strong in Buds and a Developing in Oaks.

CRITERION	BUDS (8 TO 11)	BLOSSOMS (11 TO 14)	OAKS (14 TO 17)
The question	A clear question about something they noticed.	A question that names what will change and what will be measured.	A focused question with a prediction and a reason for it.
The test	Changes one thing. Steps are listed. Tried at least twice.	Keeps other things the same. At least three trials. Measurements have units.	Controls, a comparison, repeated trials, and a note on what could throw the results off.
Data and results	A simple table or bar graph.	A table and a graph, labeled, with averages.	A table and a graph, with a note on how much the results varied.
Conclusion	Says what happened and whether the prediction was right.	Uses the data to back up the claim and explains why.	Weighs the limits of the test, says what to change, and ties the result to what is already known. Sources are listed.
Presentation	A clear display. Explains the project in their own words.	An organized display. Answers follow-up questions.	A confident explanation. Answers questions about the method and its limits.

FAIRNESS

What is not scored

- How much money was spent.
- How fancy the display looks.
- Whether the prediction was right. A test that did not turn out as expected can still earn full points if it was run fairly and reported honestly.
- How big or impressive the topic is.
- Handwriting or typing.

FAIRNESS

How scoring works

- Two judges score each project on their own. The two scores are averaged.
- Judges visit each project and ask the student questions.
- A judge does not score a project from their own family or from a student they teach.
- Ribbons go to first, second and third place in each judged band. Every young scientist, judged or not, gets a participation certificate.
- A tie is broken by the higher score on The test, then on Conclusion.
- Each family gets the score sheet and the judges' comments by email after the fair.
- Virtual entries from high school students use this same rubric. Presentation is scored from the video and photos. Virtual and in-person entries in Oaks are ranked together.
- Judges' decisions are final.

FOR JUDGES

Judge score sheet

Student: _____ **Band:** _____

Project: _____ **Judge:** _____

CRITERION	LEVEL (0 TO 4)	MULTIPLIER	POINTS	COMMENTS
The question		× 4		
The test		× 6		
Data and results		× 5		
Conclusion		× 5		
Presentation		× 5		
Total			out of 100	