

4th Annual Homeschool SCIENCE FAIR 2026

Hi Homeschoolers!

The Emerald Coast Science Center is hosting its 4th Annual Homeschool Science Fair. The past three years have been amazing, and we hope that this will give your children the same opportunities to excel in science as they would in public school. A science project is an investigation using the scientific method to discover the answer to a scientific problem. The ultimate goal of performing a science experiment is to teach students what science is and how scientific information and the scientific method is utilized in problem solving (cause/effect) which will affect them in everyday life.

There are 2 divisions your child may enter – a non-competitive division for the experience of putting together a science project and entering a Science Fair, and a competitive division for those who want to compete for awards.

Read below for all the details about the Homeschool Science Fair. Fill out your entry form and get it in as soon as possible to reserve your spot. There will be a maximum number of 20 students allowed in the Fair.

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**Date: Monday, April 13th, 2026**

**Time: 4:00-7:00 PM** (Set up 3:30-3:55)

**Place: Emerald Coast Science Center 31 SW Memorial Pkwy**

**\*\*Deadline to Enter: Wednesday April 1st, 2026\*\*** (entry form required)

**Cost: \$10 per participant** (must be paid by deadline)

**Contact Person: Harley Peters** [harley@ecscience.org](mailto:harley@ecscience.org)  
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Who can participate: Any student ages **6 and up**. Students must be able to “present” (explain in detail) their experiment on their own to our judges. Parents may not assist with any of the explanations.

Requirements / Guidelines: Each student must follow the scientific method and prepare a display on a tri-fold display board. Collections of items are not allowed. Evidence of all 7 steps of the scientific method needs to be clearly shown on the display board (7 steps explained in detail on the next pages). **Please see the “Rules” document for all specific rules.**

Competitive v. Non-Competitive Fair: Children will be grouped into age brackets depending on the number of participants to compete against each other for awards for the competitive fair. Students will not be grouped by age group in Non-competitive Fair.

Judging: Each student will stand next to their project during the allotted judging time. Parents and guests are not allowed near the participants during this time (we have outdoor space for parents and siblings to explore while judging is happening). Each student will present their project to the judges – sharing each step of the scientific method (why they chose that particular project, was the hypothesis correct, what they learned, what was their favorite part, etc., as well as answering questions the judges may ask them). Both divisions will be judged accordingly. Each student will be judged twice by two separate judges.

Awards: Every student will get a participation award, regardless of which fair they enter. They will not be handed out in front of everyone, but placed at the participant's project at the beginning of the Fair, along with a bottle of water.

For the Non-Competitive Fair - There are no awards for 1st, 2nd, or 3rd place. We want it to be a positive and encouraging experience for everyone, other than the participation award.

For the Competitive Fair - Each age bracket will be judged for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place and will receive a prize. Age brackets will be broken down into age groups depending on how many participants we have – an example would be: 8-9 years old, 10-11 years old, 12-13 years old, 14 years old and up. Non-placing participants will still receive a participation award.

Rules: Please take a moment to read the next page of “Rules”. Failure to follow any of these specific rules will result in a forfeit of winning the Competitive Fair.

**** Get your entry form and payment in early as there is a DEADLINE and a maximum number of participants allowed!! ****

I will be contacting you by April 6th to verify that you are entered in the Fair and that everything is good to go. If you haven't heard from me by that date, please contact me to make sure I have received your Entry Form.

Please email with any questions. I am looking forward to our 4th Homeschool Science Fair!

2026 Science Fair Rules & Guidelines

1. Each project must follow the scientific method with all 7 steps clearly shown on their display. (Title/Purpose, Hypothesis, Background Research, Materials, Data/Procedure, Results, Conclusion)
2. Displays must be a tri-fold display (4' x 3' is the average size). May not be wider than 4' or taller than 7'.
3. Collections of items are not allowed, unless it is made into an experiment and follows the scientific method.
4. Regardless of which Fair your child enters, absolutely no family will be allowed to stand next to the participants during the judging time. This includes picture-taking family members. Family members are welcome to explore our outdoor exhibits during the judging time. There will be time to view projects after judging. ECSC staff will be in the building with the participants assisting in anything the participants may need.
5. Please be wary of younger siblings touching the displays. Participants worked very hard on their projects and we want to respect that hard work.
6. **Parents may help their children with their projects at home, especially our younger participants. But the majority of the work needs to be the student's work and the student's understanding of what they learned during the process of the experiment. Please remember the term "help" does not mean the parent does 100% of the work for the child. The purpose of this Fair is for your children to learn the scientific process on their own and to have FUN with Science. **Please note:** Your child will not win in the competitive fair if the judges know they did not do the work on their own and cannot answer any questions about what they learned. They will be asked questions to explain what they learned during the process. The judges don't care how perfect the project came out, just that the child did the work themselves.
7. Each student will be judged at least twice. Each judge will spend a couple of minutes with each participant. This process can take over an hour by the time the judges make it around to your child twice. Please be patient during this time, and explain this to your children. Feel free to have your child bring a book to read while they wait.
8. No indoor exhibits will be open. Outdoor exhibits will be open to explore. As always, respect our exhibits and don't make a mess. Please keep all little ones occupied and quiet during the judging time.
9. Payment (\$10 per applicant) must be made before the deadline or your child will lose his spot.
10. NO FOOD or DRINK allowed by project (except water). Each participant will be able to have a water bottle at their station, set on the ground next to their board. We ask

that you please bring a reusable water bottle. If you forgot one and a child needs water, we can provide them with a plastic water bottle.

11. Please note: We are doing our very best to find the best judges possible for our Fair. It is sometimes difficult to find volunteers who are willing to donate their time. ECSC cannot be held responsible for what comments he/she writes, but please note, I have asked them to offer positive encouragement at all times.

Failure to follow any of these specific rules will result in a forfeit of winning the Competitive Fair.

4th Annual Homeschool SCIENCE FAIR
Monday April 13th, 2026

2026 Entry Form

Fill out one form per applicant. The deadline to turn these in is April 1st, 2026.

You can scan and email this form to harley@ecscience.org, or mail the forms to 31 SW Memorial Pkwy, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548, or bring them in to the Emerald Coast Science Center.

My child is entering: **Non-Competitive Fair** **Competitive Fair**

* Student's Name: _____ * Age: _____

* Parent's Name: _____

* Phone #: _____ *E-mail: _____

* Entry fee must be paid by deadline – April 1st (\$10per participant)

* Total enclosed? _____ I will pay via _____ (check/online through website/in person)

How did you find out about this Science Fair? _____

Does the participant need electricity during the Fair? Yes No

I have read through the Science Fair Rules? Yes No

Signature of Parent: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

I need the following information prior to Fair (by April 1st) via email:

- **Title of Project:** _____

Schedule of Events for Science Fair

3:30-3:55: Setup

4:00-5:30: Judging

5:30-6:30: Reception & Open Viewing

6:30-7:00: Awards Ceremony

7:00: Cleanup (out by 7:15pm)

When: Monday, April 13th, 2026

Location: Emerald Coast Science Center, 31 SW Memorial Pkwy, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548

- Please arrive on time!!

Time: 4:00-7:00 PM

3:30- 3:55 Set-Up

- Students look for names on tables and set up displays & projects.
- Use the restroom by 3:50.
- Please allow ample time to arrive & set-up displays as Judges will start **promptly at 4:00.**

4:00-5:30: Judging: Students are to be next to projects at all times ready to present

- No parents, siblings, or family may be near the participants during this time. I know you want to support your child, but please honor this request.

5:30-6:30: Reception & Open Viewing

- Students and family may view all projects during this time.
- Light snacks and refreshments will be provided.
- Photos are allowed at this time.
- Questions / comments / **praise** is welcomed by all families to our participants. This is a great way to allow your child to show off all of their hard work on his project!
- Judges will be in conference at this time to determine winners.

6:30-7:00 Awards Ceremony

7:00: **Clean up & be out by 7:15 PM**

(Sample Judge's Scoring Sheet – Both Competitive and Non-Competitive are exactly the same sheet. Judges are just stricter for Competitive Fair)

Science Fair Judging Form

Student Name _____

Age _____

	Impressive 5-4	Good 3-2	Minimal 1-0
Scientific Procedure			
Clear and specific question			
Clear and specific hypothesis			
Complete and thorough method (step by step)			
Complete and thorough data (logs, graphs, tables, photos, etc.)			
Conclusion supported by data and is relevant to hypothesis			
Originality			
Original Topic or approach			
Students own work			
Presentation			
Appropriate materials and construction			
Clear and easy to understand			

Positive Comments?

Judges Initials _____



Overall Rating _____

How Do I Start a Science Experiment?

1. Select a Topic

Remember that a Science Fair Project is a test you do to find an answer to a question, not just showing what you know about something. What is it that you are trying to find out from your experiment?

2. Gather Background Information

Gather information about your topic from books, magazines, the Internet, people and companies. Investigate what others have already learned about your question. Gather information that will help you perform your experiment. Keep notes about where you got your info.

3. Start the Scientific Method

* State the Purpose of your experiment - What are you trying to find out? Select a variable (something you will change/vary) that will help you find your answer.

* State your Hypothesis - your guess about what the answer will be. After having thoroughly researched a topic, you should have some prediction about what you think will happen in your experiment.

4. Run A Controlled Experiment and Record Data

Now that you have come up with a hypothesis, you need to develop a procedure for testing whether it is true or false. This involves changing one variable and measuring the impact that this change has on other variables. When you are conducting your experiment, you need to make sure that you are only measuring the impact of a single change. Scientists run experiments more than once to verify that results are consistent. Each time that you perform your experiment is called a run or a trial. Keep notes in one place. Write down everything you can think of - you might need it later.

5. Graphs and Charts

What happened? Answer that question then put the results in graphs and charts.

6. Results

Analyze Your Results: At this stage, you want to be organizing and analyzing the data that you have collected during the course of your experiment in order to summarize what your experiment has shown you.

7. Conclusion

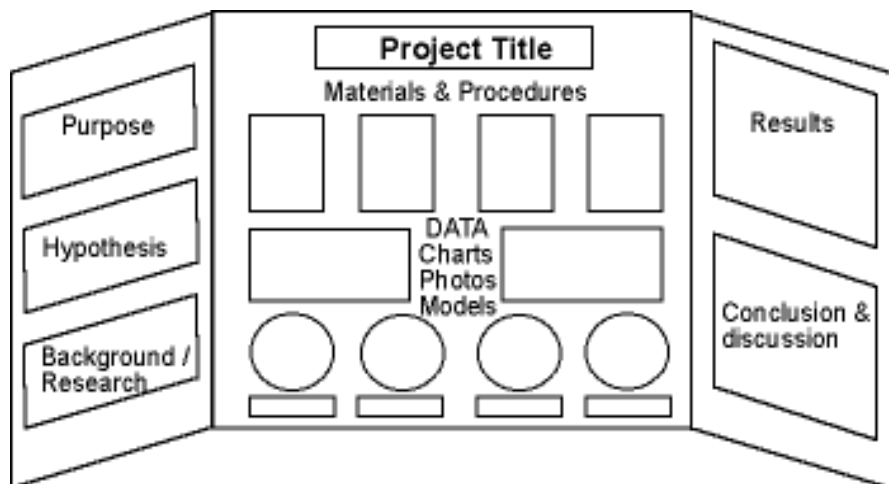
This is your opportunity to explain the meaning of your results. Did your experiment support your hypothesis? It is okay if your hypothesis was wrong. Does additional research need to be conducted? How did your experiment address your initial question and purpose?

8. Construct an Exhibit or Display

Your Display Board is the first impression of your science fair project. It is a display that tells the comprehensive but concise story about the project and all your efforts. So keep it simple, very neat and well organized. Make it fun, but be sure people can understand what you did. Show that you used the Scientific Method.

Choose a catchy, attention-grabbing title that accurately summarizes your research. The title should be big and easily read from across the room.

The following is a sample board that clearly and neatly shows **all 7 steps** of the scientific method: (each step is discussed in further detail on the next page)



Organize your information like a newspaper so that your audience can quickly follow the thread of your experiment by reading from top to bottom, then left to right. **Include each of the 7 steps above of your project on your board.**

9. Write a Short Report

Tell the story of your project - tell what you did and exactly how you did it so that others can share in your discoveries. Include a page that shows where you gathered background information and a title page for the cover. This report must be typed. This is for participants ages 8 and up.

10. Practice Your Presentation to the Judges

Practice explaining your project to someone (parent, friend, grandparent, etc.) This will help you be calm on Science Fair Day. The judges are very nice and will be interested in what you did and what you learned. You will not have to present your project in front of a group of people, but you will have 2 judges come around and talk to you. You might be asked questions about the scientific method, why you chose your project, and you will be judged on your enthusiasm and knowledge of your project. Make sure you make eye contact and can explain your project without reading directly off the board.

The 7 Steps of the Scientific Method

Step 1:

TITLE & PURPOSE – The title can be the question in a “catchy” form. The purpose (or Question) is what you want to solve in your experiment.

Step 2:

HYPOTHESIS – This is your educated guess based on your research.

Step 3:

BACKGROUND RESEARCH – Include a short paragraph that gives the background information on which you based your hypothesis.

Step 4:

MATERIALS / PROCEDURE – List all materials used. Explain the procedure for the experiment.

Step 5:

DATA - These are your results displayed in a way that your audience can understand. It is usually displayed in a chart, table, graph, or photographs.



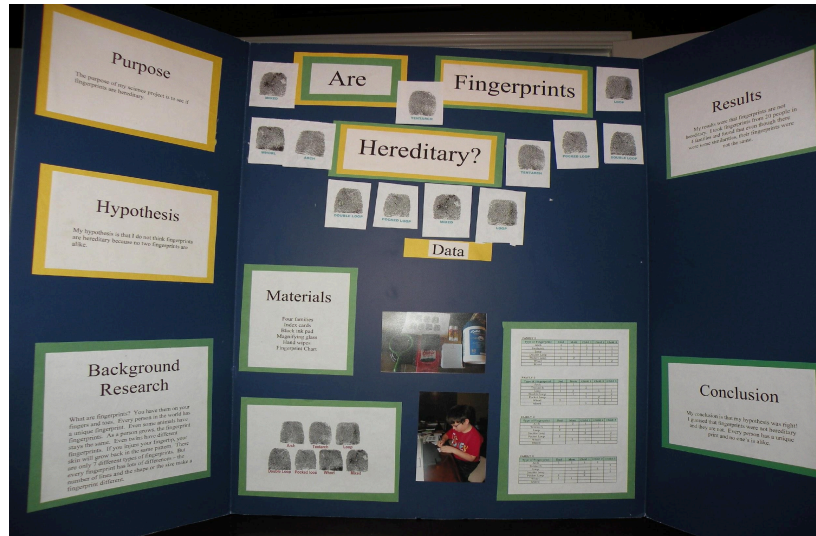
Step 6:

RESULTS – This is a statement or paragraph explaining what happened during the experiment. It can also include pictures.

Step 7:

CONCLUSION - This is a statement of whether your hypothesis was right or not. If it wasn't right, why you think it turned out the way it did, and what you do differently next time.

Science Fair Project Example



Are Fingerprints Hereditary?

Purpose

The purpose of my science project is to see if fingerprints are hereditary.

Hypothesis

My hypothesis is that I do not think fingerprints are hereditary because no two fingerprints are alike.

Background Research

What are fingerprints? You have them on your fingers and toes. Every person in the world has a unique fingerprint. Even some animals have fingerprints. As a person grows, the fingerprint stays the same. Even twins have different fingerprints. If you injure your fingertip, your skin will grow back in the same pattern. There are only 7 different types of fingerprints. But every fingerprint has lots of differences – the number of lines and the shape or the size make a fingerprint different.

Materials

Four families
Index cards
Black ink pad
Magnifying glass
Hand wipes
Fingerprint chart

Data

(Here we put pictures of the process of the experiment, the materials used, the chart with findings of the experiment, and pictures of the different types of fingerprints)

Results

My results were that fingerprints are not hereditary. I took fingerprints from 220 people in 4 families and found that even though there were some similarities, their fingerprints were not the same.

Conclusion

My conclusion is that my hypothesis was right! I guessed that fingerprints were not hereditary and they are not. Every person has a unique print and no one's alike.

Hints from Judges (especially for Competitive Fair)

- When addressing the judges, speak clearly. Don't talk too fast.
- Make eye contact.
- Keep good posture when speaking. Don't slouch.
- Practice speaking in front of people.
- It's OK to write a script for your presentation, but don't merely reel off a memorized speech. With sufficient practice, your "speech," should sound like conversation, not canned.
- Do not clutter your presentation with long words and lists of numbers. It is OK to generalize, unless you are asked for specific data to support your claims.
- Get plenty of rest for the Fair!
- Do not be ashamed or hesitate to utter the words "I don't know." The more you work on a project, the more you realize that you don't know.
- Do not falsify or hide information. Be truthful at all times.
- Be excited and energetic about your work!
- Cite all of the help you received. Give credit where credit is due.
- Rehearse your presentation beforehand.
- Check your time. You should be able to completely explain your project in less than 7 minutes.
- Keep your display board simple, clear, and free of unnecessary clutter. A neat and tidy board is better than a fancy or expensive model.
- Avoid name-dropping, bragging, or embellishments.
- Allow plenty of time in your presentation for judges to ask questions.
- Have fun showing off your work to others!