

Display Board Tips

USEF Teacher Workshop

Your display board is important. It's not nearly as important as your judging interviews—they count much, much, much more than your display board. But, first impressions matter, and the first impressions judges get about your project is what they see on your display board, read in your abstract, and find in your lab notebook.

What should my display board say?

Your display board should do two things: First, it should tell a story about what you did, why you did it, how you did it, what you find out, and why people should care. That's the process, the scientific method or engineering design process. Second, your board should highlight the end result of your project: your conclusion and its importance or the useful tool you engineered. That's the product, the final result of your product. Your board should convey both process and product because it's the combination of the two that make an excellent project.

How can I make my board look good?

Here are a few suggestions about the mechanics of board layout and design. See www.sciencebuddies.org for more information.

- Make your text readable. Font sizes >100 for your title, 32-48 for headers, 16-18 for body text, and 12-14 for captions. Remember that the person reading your board is standing a few feet away from it, not reading it like a paper. These larger font sizes also help limit the amount of text on your board. Putting too much information on the display board is a common mistake.
- Figures are awesome. Use graphs, flow charts, diagrams, and pictures whenever possible. Make sure they are large enough to be read from a distance, and be sure that your figures have captions. Number your figures and refer to them by number elsewhere on your board (e.g., “See figure 1.”)
- Use matte photo paper instead of regular printer paper for printing your text and figures. It's a bit more expensive, but makes text and images look crisper and cleaner. You can use glossy photo paper, too, but sometimes glossy paper creates a harsh glare.
- Use a paper cutter or paper trimmer to cut your paper; it makes nice, straight edges.
- Photo paper is thicker than regular paper, so instead of overlapping sheets of paper when your text doesn't fit on one page, cut the paper and make the edges flush. If done well and with straight edges, the seam is almost invisible.
- If you have an ink jet printer, you might be able to cut a piece of poster board to the width of your printer's paper feeder and then print on that piece of poster board. This is great for printing titles because it lets you print things with dimensions like 8.5” x 20”. Your title then fits on one page, and you don't have to worry about lining things up perfectly.