
# Georgia College & State University
# K-5 State Science Fair

# Student Exhibitor and Sponsor/Teacher Handbook

This handbook contains important information for students who have been selected from a local, school, or regional science fair in the state of Georgia. The winners from local, school, county or regional Science & Engineering Fairs across the state earn the opportunity to advance to the Georgia College K-5 State Science Fair competition.

# Georgia College & State University
# K-5 STATE SCIENCE FAIR
# THURSDAY
# March 12, 2026

**LOCATION:**

- **Competition with all judging will be held IN-PERSON at the Centennial Center on Georgia College & State University's campus**
- **Award ceremony will be held March 12, 2026 at the Centennial Center *(tentatively 4:00 pm)***

## Useful Resources

**Georgia College Science Education Center webpage:** http://science.gcsu.edu - go to Projects and Partnerships, Science and Engineering Fairs to find Science Fair competition information.

**Questions? Contact science@gcsu.edu or 478-445-7531.**

Georgia College K-5 State Science Fair (GCSSF) is proud to be one of the only science fairs in the state of Georgia. Our successful regional fair (RSEF) is affiliated with the Georgia Science & Engineering Fair (GSEF} and the International Science & Engineering Fair (ISEF}.

The K-5 State Science Fair showcases the results of scientific inquiry by primary and elementary students in Georgia . Participants learn how to identify problems and design unique, organized and logical strategies to solving the questions. The research process teaches students how scientists and engineers contribute to the advancement of science and engineering.

## Why should YOU participate in Fair?

At the Georgia College K-5 State Science Fair, our hope for your participation is that you become captivated by the fun and challenge of doing a science or engineering project. A good project will certainly present a challenge and the benefits of overcoming those difficulties will last you for a lifetime. Students tell us that the scariest part of science fair is judging; they also tell us that talking to the judges was the best part of the process. We hope you will make new friends who share your interests and that you gain insights into possible careers.

Visit our Georgia College Science and Engineering Fair video to see what others have to say about their experience.
https://vimeo.com/156458873

# GEORGIA COLLEGE - SCIENCE & ENGINEERING FAIR
# REQUIRED FORMS GUIDE & CHECKLIST

The following required forms and guidelines help students ensure that their proposed research is safe, ethical, and approved by a parent, teacher, and field experts.

| **Forms required for EVERY project:** | **Click here for FORMS** |
|---|---|
| ❑ **Participation Agreement** | Required for every student participating (not just one per project). |
| ❑ **Official Abstract Form** | Required for state fair; regional or local fairs may have different Abstract requirements. |
| ❑ **Checklist for Adult Sponsor [1]** | BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION Adult Sponsor (with Student Researcher) reviews what forms and approvals are required to ensure project's compliance with ISEF rules, as well as local, state, and federal laws. |
| ❑ **Student Checklist [1A]** | BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION Student Researcher provides basic details about research and experimentation. Must be accompanied by Research Plan/Project Summary (see below). |
| ❑ **Research Plan/ Project Summary**<br>Free-typed document, not a form. | BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION The Research Plan/Project Summary is written before experimentation to detail rationale, research question, methodology, and risk assessment. Any changes made during research can be added to the original Plan as an addendum, recognizing that some changes may require returning to SRC/IRB for review and approval. If no additional approvals are required, the addendum serves as a Project Summary to explain the research that was conducted. If no changes are made from original Research Plan, no Project Summary is required. |
| ❑ **Approval Form [1B]**<br>One form per student<br>(not per project) | BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION Student Researcher, parent/guardian, and SRC consent to and approve the project. Must be signed by student and parent/guardian BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION. Must be signed by SRC in (2a) BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION if research involves human participants, vertebrate animals, or PHBAs and was *not* conducted at a RRI. For projects involving human participants, vertebrate animals, or PHBAs conducted at a RRI and preapproved by the institution, SRC signs in (2b) after experimentation confirming institutional preapproval and compliance with ISEF rules. Regional Fair SRC signs in section (3) after experimentation and prior to competition. |
| **Additional forms required for specific types of research:** | |
| ❑ **Regulated Research Institution/ Industrial Setting [1C]** | Required for research conducted at a ***college/university, medical facility, industrial setting,*** or ***other lab or research setting*** other than home, school or field. Completed by supervising adult at RRI after experimentation. |
| ❑ **Qualified Scientist Form [2]** | BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION Required for research with ***human participants, vertebrate animals, potentially hazardous biological agents,*** or ***DEA-controlled substances***. Completed by QS/DS BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION. |
| ❑ **Risk Assessment Form [3]** | BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION Required for research involving ***hazardous chemicals, activities or devices,*** or ***DEA-controlled substances,*** some ***human participants*** projects, and some ***PHBAs***, including protists, composting, coliform test kits, decomposition of vertebrate organisms, and microbial fuel cells. Recommended for student-designed inventions/prototypes. Completed by Student and signed by QS/DS BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION. |
| ❑ **Human Participants Form [4]** | IRB APPROVAL BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION Required for research involving ***human participants***, even if participants are only testing or providing feedback on invention/prototype/application. MUST BE APPROVED BY FULL IRB (ALL THREE SIGNATURES) BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION. IRB determines risk, supervision, and consent required. |
| ❑ **Vertebrate Animal Form [5A]** or **Vertebrate Animal Form [5B]** | SRC APPROVAL BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION Required for research involving ***vertebrate animals***. 5A is for research conducted at home, school, or field, which MUST BE APPROVED BY SRC BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION. SRC determines level of supervision required (DS, QS, and/or veterinarian). 5B is for research conducted at a RRI, which must be approved by institution's IACUC. 5B must completed and signed by QS/PI after experimentation. |
| ❑ **Potentially Hazardous Biological Agents Form [6A]** | SRC APPROVAL BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION Required for research involving ***microorganisms, rDNA, fresh/frozen tissue (including primary cell lines, human and other primate established cell lines and tissue cultures), blood, blood products,*** or ***body fluids***. QS/DS selects box describing research setting and required approvals. MUST BE APPROVED BY SRC/IACUC/IBC BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION. SRC indicates agreement either before experimentation (if *not* done at RRI) or after experimentation (if done at RRI). |
| ❑ **Human/Animal Tissue Form [6B]** | BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION Required in addition to 6A for research involving ***fresh/frozen tissue (including primary cell lines, human and other primate established cell lines and tissue cultures), blood, blood products,*** or ***body fluids***. MUST BE COMPLETED BY QS/DS BEFORE EXPERIMENTATION. |
| ❑ **Continuation/Research Progression Project Form [7]** | Required for projects that ***continue or expand upon a previous year's work***. Must be accompanied by Abstract and Research Plan from previous year(s). |

# What to Expect At the Fair

**Students:**

- Project set-up is Wednesday from 5:00 PM- 8:00PM and Thursday from 7:00 AM - 8:00 AM.
- Safety inspections for each project will occur Wednesday night and Thursday morning. Any safety violations need to be resolved prior to 9:00 am Thursday.
- Wear your name tag (received at Registration/Check-In).
    - Check your name tag at registration for any errors.
    - The back of your name tag will have a specific interview time for your project. This is the time you are required to be at your display to be interviewed by a panel of judges.
- You are expected to be at your project display between 10:00 AM and 12:00 PM at your designated INTERVIEW time. **(Teachers and parents are not permitted at the project display so practice with your student and provide something for the student to do while waiting to be judged).**
- **Each project will only by interviewed <u>once</u> at a designated time by a panel of 2-4 judges for specific scientific categories.**
    - Each judge panel will have a lead judge that holds an advanced degree (Masters or PhD) in that scientific area.
    - Some Judges represent Category Awards (1st, 2nd, honorable mention in scientific category), while others are looking for Special Award recipients, and all are really important. *Please ask category judges to sign your Judge's Placement Card (on the table next to your project number).*
    - After each interview, each judge will submit separate scores, scores will be tabulated, and the lead judge will meet with other lead judges to make final decisions on awards.
- Projects are open to public viewing on Thursday between 1:00 PM and 4:00 PM. (Optional not required!)
- Dress for success. You are encouraged to dress as neatly and professionally as you can. Don't forget to wear your name tag.
- Remove projects AFTER the conclusion of the Awards Ceremony (Primary/Elementary). **Early removal may result in disqualification.**

**Teachers/Sponsors:**

- After Project Check-In and setup is complete (after 8:00 AM) you will NOT be permitted on the exhibitor floor. The project may be disqualified if unauthorized people are at the project area (please share this information with parents and observers).
  ***We recognize the age of the student and will provide a specific area for teachers to remain nearby for ease of the student but you may not interfere with the judging process. Show your student where you will be seated to ease their mind and in case they need you.**
- If the exhibitor receives a safety violation, please assist the exhibitor in going to the safety booth (*located at the Racquetball Rooms) and help the exhibitor resolve the violation. We realize a safety violation can scare the younger exhibitors so try to calmly resolve the matter so they do not lose focus.
- Teacher/Adult Sponsor Q&A Meetings may be available starting at 10:30 AM. Bring all questions/concerns you have to discuss.

**Awards Ceremony:**

- *Georgia College Location Centennial Center at TBA*
- ***We ask schools to sit together with at least 1-2 teachers/chaperones sitting with the students.***
- ***<u>Only students (and a chaperone) are permitted to sit on the floor</u> - all parents and guests need to sit in the bleachers. You will be asked to move.***

# Project Numbering System

Entries are displayed by (1) division, (2) field of study (ISEF category number), and (3) sequential number of project entry.

**(1) Letter Designation**
P=PRIMARY
E=ELEMENTARY

**(2) Category Group**

**BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES:**
- ANIMAL SCIENCES - 01
- BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING - 05
- CELLULAR AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGY - 06
- COMPUTATIONAL BIOLOGY AND BIOINFORMATICS - 08
- EARTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE - 09
- MICROBIOLOGY - 16
- PLANT SCIENCES - 18

**CHEMICAL SCIENCES:**
- BIOCHEMISTRY (03)
- CHEMISTRY (07)
- MATERIALS SCIENCE (14)

**HEALTH and SOCIAL SCIENCES:**
- BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE (02)
- BIOMEDICAL AND HEALTH SCIENCE (04)
- Technology Enhances the Arts (21)
- TRANSLATIONAL MEDICAL SCIENCE (22)

**PHYSICAL AND COMPUTATIONAL SCIENCES:**
- EMBEDDED SYSTEMS - 10
- ENERGY: SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS AND DESIGN - 11
- ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY: STATICS AND DYNAMICS - 12
- ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING -13
- MATHEMATICS - 15
- PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY - 17
- ROBOTICS AND INTELLIGENT MACHINES - 19
- SYSTEMS SOFTWARE - 20

**(3) Sequential exhibitor numbers**
001-200

For example, Project Number P0903 is Primary Division, Biological Sciences Group, Earth and Environmental Science Category 09, and Exhibitor number 03. Each category group is color-coded and easy to find on the exhibitor floor.

# SCHEDULE of Events *( tentative)*

| | |
|---|---|
| **WEDNESDAY EVENING (March 11, 2026)** | |
| 5:00 – 8:00 PM | **Early Project Set-up** – Centennial Center |
| **THURSDAY MORNING (March 12, 2026)** | |
| 7:00 – 8:30 AM | **Check-in and Project Set-up** – Centennial Center |
| 8:00-9:15 AM | **Safety Inspections**<br>(*If you receive a safety violation then proceed to the Safety Booth to resolve the situation) |
| 9:30 AM | **Welcome Remarks –** Exhibit Hall by Fair Director |
| 10:00 AM – Noon | **Student Interviews with Judges Panel**<br>Each participant must be at their project at specific interview times (printed on Name Badge)<br>Block A – Interviews (10:00 am – 11:00 am)<br>Block B – Interviews (11:00 am – 12:00 pm)<br>Activities will be offered for students during their "off-hour" from interviews and for guests that are waiting.<br>*NOTE – some students may be asked to stay a little longer for Special Awards and Grand Prize interviews, if needed. |
| 10:00 AM – Noon | **STEM Marketplace and Activities** |
| 12:00 – 1:30 PM | **Lunch Break**<br>*Participants are responsible for providing their own lunch. Picnic tables are available if needed. |
| **THURSDAY AFTERNOON (March 12, 2026)** | |
| 1:30 – 4:00 PM | **Fair Open to the Public –** Centennial Center *Participants are not required to stand at their exhibits. |
| 2:00 – 3:30 PM | **STEM and Campus Activities - TBA** |
| 3:45 PM (begin seating)<br>4:00 – 5:00 PM | **Awards Ceremony –** Centennial Center (Main floor seating for competitors with one adult chaperone and Guests seating in the bleachers) |
| 5:00 – 6:30 PM | **Project Removal and Clean-up** – Centennial Center |

# What to expect during JUDGING

## Awards - There are three kinds of awards.

- **Category Awards** are given by the Georgia College K-5 State Science Fair for scientific merit, including the First Place, Second Place, and Honorable Mention Awards in each of the categories. About 30% of projects receive a Category Award.
- ***Grand Prize Awards*** are given by the Georgia College K-5 State Science Fair to top division projects ***( Best of Class)*** .
- ***Special Awards*** are given by various professional organizations and companies. Each organization has its own criteria. Special awards may take many forms, including certificates, cash, trips, equipment, and internships.

## Pre-judging

The panel of judges will have access to any materials you/your team have posted when you registered, this includes: paperwork, digital display boards, notebooks, and the abstract.

## Category Awards Judging

A panel of two-four judges will evaluate each project. These judges are instructed to choose first, second, and/or honorable mention awards from their group of projects. Projects are judged with projects from the same category and with similar fields of study. Each panel of judges is led by a judge holding a Ph.D. or advanced degree in discipline.

## Special Awards

Special Awards are handled by the organization sponsoring each award. The criteria for the award are determined by the sponsoring organization, and they usually supply the judging team.

Some of these judging teams look at every project while others are interested only in projects having to do with one specific subject (for example: they may only want to look at projects related to water). **If the topic of your project matches the criteria for their organization, the special award judges may ask to schedule a separate interview time to talk with you/your team about the project.** These judges often use the titles and abstracts of the projects to determine whether a project will be reviewed.

## Grand Prize judging

Grand Prize (Best of Show and Best of Class) judging includes all projects per division. Judges for these groups have either a doctorate in their field or equivalent experience.

In addition to identifying the Grand Prize winners and the Grand Prize alternates, the Grand Prize judging teams rank the other outstanding projects.

# Don't Forget! Exhibit Display Guidelines

**1. Exhibit Size**

Cannot exceed 15 inches (38 cm) deep, front to back; 48 inches (122 cm) wide, side to side; and 5 ft (150 cm) high above the table top. Any materials which are to be displayed must fit on the table in front of the display board. This space is approx. 15" x 24". Display boards of 3-4ft height (vs 5 ft) are recommended by the judges for adequate readability.

2. **Abstract and research notebook**

Must be displayed with your project. All other forms must be in a folder/binder and easily available for judges to review.

**3. UNACCEPTABLE FOR DISPLAY**

- No formal *Project Summaries* are allowed for distribution (only the Abstract may be distributed)
- All liquids, including water
- Human or animal food (ex. popcorn, M&Ms, etc.)
- Living organisms (including plants, fungi, and bacteria)
- Soil or waste samples, toxic waste samples
- Dried plant materials
- Taxidermy specimens or parts
- Preserved vertebrate or invertebrate animals or their parts
- Human/animal parts or body fluids (blood, urine)
- Laboratory/household chemicals
- Batteries with open-top cells
- Poisons, drugs, controlled substances, hazardous substances or devices (for example: firearms, weapons, ammunition, reloading devices, model rockets)
- Dry ice or other sublimating solids (solids which vaporize to a gas without passing through a liquid phase)
- Sharp items (for example: syringes, needles, pipettes, knives)
- Any flames, open or concealed, or highly flammable materials
- Gases or empty tanks that previously contained combustible liquids or gases, including butane and propane
- Awards, medals, business cards, flags, endorsements or acknowledgements from previous fairs.
- Photographs or other visual presentations depicting vertebrate animals in surgical techniques, dissections, necropsies, other lab techniques, improper handling methods, improper housing conditions, procedures, etc.
- Photographs of people other than student presenter(s) unless signed Form 4 is available.

# Display Safety Requirements

- Proper attention to safety is expected of all participants, including compliance with the following requirements:
- No hand-held laser pointers of any power. No operation of Class III or Class IV lasers.
- No operation of unshielded belts, pulleys, chains, or moving parts with tension or pinch points.
- Any exhibit producing temperatures that could cause physical burns must be adequately insulated.
- Properly fasten all wiring. Nails, tacks, or unshielded staples are not acceptable.
- Electrical power: Only supplied to projects which cannot be displayed any other way. NOT FOR LAPTOPS alone.
- Electrical power supplied to approved projects and, therefore, the maximums allowed for projects is 120 or 220 Volt, A.C., single phase, 60 cycles. Maximum circuit amperage/wattage available is determined by the electrical circuit capacities of the exhibit hall and may be adjusted on-site by the Display and Safety Committee. For all electrical regulations "120 Volt A.C." or "220 Volt A.C." is intended to encompass the corresponding range of voltage as supplied by the San Jose Convention Center.
- All electrical connectors, wiring, switches, extension cords, fuses, etc. must be UL-listed and must be appropriate for the load and equipment. Connections must be soldered or made with UL-listed connectors. Wiring, switches, and metal parts must have adequate insulation and over-current safety devices (such as fuses) and must be inaccessible to anyone other than the Championship participant. Exposed electrical equipment or metal that may possibly be energized must be shielded with a non-conducting material or with a grounded metal box to prevent accidental contact.
- Wiring that is not a part of a commercially available UL-listed appliance or piece of equipment must have a clearly visible fuse or circuit breaker on the supply side of the power source and prior to any project equipment.
- There must be an accessible, clearly visible on/off switch or other means of disconnect from the 120 or 220 Volt power source.
- Computerized PowerPoint® presentations or equivalents can be made from battery powered laptops only, and are allowed only to provide data unavailable in any other format.
- At its discretion, the compliance committee may restrict the operation of the project, or exhibition of specified items, to the time of judging only. Failure to follow these restrictions can result in project disqualification after judging is completed.
- If applicable, Forms 1C and/or Form 7 should be displayed. Each signed Form 4 should be available, but not displayed.

***The Georgia College Regional Science and Engineering Fair will disqualify any exhibit which, in its opinion, does not comply with all preceding Project Display Rules.***

# Loss or Damage

The Georgia College Science and Engineering Fair assumes no responsibility for loss or damage to any project or project part. Valuable items should be simulated or removed when the student is not present at his/her project.

***Projects not removed by 7:00 PM Fair Day may be destroyed and are not the responsibility of GCSU.***