



Supporting Your Child's Scientific Journey

Parent(s)'s Role

Parent(s), your child is ready to become a scientist. Are you ready to witness their journey?

As a parent, your job is to oversee the production of the experiment or invention, not to do it for them. Let your child take control of the project, but always be on standby in case they need an extra pair of hands to help man the experiment. Be supportive, offer tips and suggestions, but do not influence them too much. Some things that you may want to help your child with is getting supplies and materials, helping them set up their experiment in a safe zone, and making sure there are no hazardous chemicals that may blow up your house... You can also help with transporting the project on the big day and attend the science fair to provide some much needed moral support.

This is the perfect opportunity to spend time with your child and get involved in his or her academic life! Most importantly, have fun together!

Project Ideas

It is always a daunting task to help your child come up with the perfect project idea. You may not know much about the topics yourself; in fact, Science may have been your worst subject. Fear not, the world is your playground for the curiosities buried deep in your mind. Bernard Baruch said it best, "Millions saw the apple fall, but Netwon asked why." With your child, look around your house and through the windows to the world outside. Step out into the backyard or garden, or take a short walk with your child. Together, wonder about things, ask why something is the way it is, or how something may be affected for better or worse. As you brainstorm casually, tuck the questions away in a safe spot so that later on when your child is deciding on his or her topic, you can help remind them of things they noticed earlier. It is important to let your child be in charge of the conversation and come up with their own game plan. It is your job to help them plant their ideas and make sure they have all the necessary steps to grow. Once they have decided on the topic and their project idea, you can take the

extra steps to research on the topic yourself so that you can make sure they are on the right path.

Stuck for ideas? Click here to enter our Cyber Garden/Greenhouse with your child and see the kinds of investigations your child can conduct in order to understand some of the environmental issues we face today. Plan and prepare for the future by understanding what makes a healthy, happy green world.

An in-depth list of project ideas can be found here: http://www.sciencebuddies.org/science-fair-projects/science_project_ideas.php

Helping with the Project

In order to help your child, you need to make sure they are on track and able to finish their project on time. You can do this by creating a timeline in order to help your child track their progress and by reminding them of the steps involved in the scientific method. The combination of the timeline and the scientific method will make sure your child is on track to completing their project. You can also keep track of your child's progression through the scientific method and the timeline by getting them to check in with you every day. This way you will know when a little extra motivation may be needed.

The steps of the **scientific method** are as follows:

- Ask a Question
- Do Background Research
- Construct a Hypothesis
- Test Your Hypothesis (Experimenting)
- Analyze Your Data and Draw a Conclusion
- Display Results

One of the most important things you can do to help your child is to help get them the supplies they need to complete their project. However, make sure your child supplies you with the list. If you simply go and get supplies you may not pick up what they actually need. Most supplies your child will need can be easily found at an office supply store or a department store. Also, try to make the effort to get the supplies quickly once you receive the list in order to allow your child as much time to work on their project as possible.

Remember not to....

As a parent, it is only natural to want to help your child succeed. Not getting too involved may be difficult, especially if you do have a science background. As much as you want to help remember that you should not be dictating what the notes say. You can be an editor, but make

sure you are only correcting spelling and grammar mistakes, not rewriting them. You should also not provide or locate all of the information for your child to use. Helping with a few very specific items is okay, but finding information is when your child really gets to explore the topic that they are interested in and learn more about it. There is a difference between giving your child 10 books or picking up a specific title that your child requested. Also remember not to draw the diagrams. Some of you may be more artistic than your child, but the diagrams need to resemble what your child imagined them to be. This can only happen if they draw them for themselves. Finally, and most importantly, **DO NOT DO THE PROJECT FOR THEM!** This is your child's chance to shine. Sure, they may not win, but your child may find something that interests them. Maybe they'll continue their research and come up with a first place prize for next year.

Other Helpful Ideas

The seed to your child's project has been planted, and now you can sit back and watch the experiment grow. As with everything in life, your child will feel more value if there is a constant and consistent audience. He or she knows that there will be a final audience at the end of the project/ Science Fair day, but having you there for extra support will keep them excited and motivated to show someone their growing idea along the way. If the student is in a younger grade, your child may need help documenting the experiment. Have your camera ready to snap pictures along the way. Closer to the Science Fair date, you can help by giving them advice as to what they may say, or tips on how to present professionally and effectively. Practice doing a mock presentation with them by having them present their project, and then asking them questions you think the judges may ask. Give them feedback for improvements on their presentation and answers. Being with them on the day of the science fair will help them relax and remember all the things you have learned together. And last but not least, have fun!!!