

2012 Young Naturalist Awards Judging Rubric

This rubric will be used by judges to evaluate students' essays. It may also be used by students to guide them in their research and in the preparation of their essays.

	Excellent—Score 4	Moderate—Score 3	Limited—Score 2	Poor—Score 1
1. Question	A thoughtful and researchable question is posed. The topic is specific.	The question posed may be difficult to research. Topic may be too broad.	The question posed is too difficult to research. Or--Answers to question may be too readily available.	The question is not stated.
2. Hypothesis, Prediction	The hypothesis is clearly stated and is testable.	The hypothesis is stated.	The hypothesis is unclear and is untestable.	The hypothesis is absent.
3. Background Research	Research is thorough and relevant to the investigation. Ideas are clearly explained.	Research has some relevance to the investigation. Some ideas are explained.	Minimal research done. Information gathered was not explained or relevant to investigation.	No background research was done.
4. Procedure, Design, Materials (Published data may be used if investigation is based on prior research.)	Procedure is detailed, thorough, and appropriate. Clearly defined sequential steps. Procedure can be replicated. All materials are listed.	Procedure is appropriate. Most steps and most materials are listed.	Procedure is not relevant to investigation. Steps are not well explained. Materials far from complete.	Procedure is unclear, lacking major components or no procedure is stated. No materials are listed or used.
5. Variables, Controls, Sample Size	Variables are identified. Controls appropriate. Sample size and/or number of trials appropriate.	Variables somewhat identified. Controls somewhat known. Sample size and/or number of trials insufficient.	Missing an important variable or control. Sample size insufficient. Only 1 trial.	Missing two or more variables/ controls. No trials or sample size.
6. Data collection	Appropriate amount of data is systematically gathered and recorded.	Much of the needed data is gathered and recorded.	Data is unclear, poorly gathered and recorded.	No data gathered or reported.
7. Data Presentation: Tables, Graphs, and Charts	Appropriate graphic(s) chosen to display data. Tables, graphs, and/or charts are accurate, easily understood and complete (titles, labels, data key, variables, correct units of measure).	Graphic(s) chosen to display data. Graphic(s) accurate, but some components (titles, labels, data key, variables, correct units of measure) are missing.	Graphic(s) chosen inappropriate for the type of data presented. Graphic(s) not easily understood. Most or all of components (titles, labels, data key, variables, correct units of measure) missing.	Graphics are not used.

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8. Discussion of Data Analysis/ Conclusion	Data is thoroughly discussed. Sources of error considered. Explanation is made for how/why hypothesis was supported or rejected. Conclusions are supported by data.	Data is discussed. Some sources of error are considered. Explanation attempted for how/why hypothesis was supported or rejected. Some data does not support conclusions.	Minimal discussion of data. Sources of error are not considered. Explanation attempted for how/why hypothesis was supported or rejected. Most data does not support conclusions.	Data not discussed. Sources of error are not considered. Explanation for how/why hypothesis was supported or rejected not attempted. Conclusions are not related to data collected.
9. Further research	Changes to improve procedures are suggested. Questions for further research are posed.	Some changes to improve procedure are considered. Questions for further research are posed.	Some consideration for changes to procedure but lacking in depth/description. No questions for further research are posed.	Changes to procedure or questions for further research are not attempted.
10. Visuals	Illustrations, photos, and/or maps are relevant, supporting and adding depth to the investigation.	Illustrations, photos, and/or maps are included, but not all are relevant to the investigation.	Insufficient number of illustrations, photos, and/or maps. Some visuals not relevant to investigation.	No visuals are included.
11. Essay Presentation	The investigation is presented clearly and concisely with a logical progression of ideas and supporting evidence. Strong personal voice.	The essay is organized but sometimes strays from the focus of the investigation. Personal voice is present.	The essay is not logically or effectively structured. No personal voice.	The information presented is unfocused, poorly organized and shows little thought or effort. No personal voice.
12. Grammar, Spelling	No grammatical errors. No spelling errors. Word choice is appropriate. Essay title is appropriate.	A few grammatical errors. A few spelling errors. Most words are used appropriately. Essay title is appropriate.	Some grammatical errors. Some spelling errors. Inappropriate use of many words. Essay title is inappropriate or misleading.	Many grammatical errors. Many spelling errors. Inappropriate use of words. No essay title.
13. Proper Citing of Sources	Sources of information (including visuals) properly credited in the essay. Bibliography properly formatted. Many references from at least three types of sources are included.	Some sources of information (including visuals) incorrectly cited or absent in the essay. Bibliography has some formatting errors. Fewer than 3 types of sources are included.	Citing of sources in the essay is poorly done or is absent. Bibliography is not properly formatted. Few references are cited.	Information was plagiarized. (Grounds for disqualification) No bibliography.