

What is a Science Project?

A Science Project is a way for a student to carry out an investigation in much the same way a *real* researcher might in a *real* laboratory. It is an **investigation**, initiated by a **student** and carried through **all** the proper steps to answer an **original** question.

A Science Project is **NOT**...

A Research Paper: A research paper is an important part of a Science Project. The research paper will explain what is currently known on the topic of your investigation. It might be called "Background Information". The research paper, though, is not enough. Sometimes a student will present a project that is nothing more than a display of research. The title might be, "What makes Volcanoes Form?" All the information they found in their research will be presented along with wonderful illustrations and/or a model. This is NOT a good example of a Science Project.

A Model: A model may or may not be part of your Science Project, but like the research paper, it is not enough. There are many wonderful models that are available in stores. You could even make your own model of something natural (the solar system) or man-made (a nuclear power plant) but neither of these would make a good Science Project.

A Technology Display: Quite a bit might be learned by building a laser or a working computer but again, simply building a piece of technology and writing about what you did is not a good Science Project.

A Scientific Demonstration: Most books of science experiments are very poor resources for Science Projects. These books are full of experiments that can be performed easily in the home with common objects. The experiments are meant to illustrate certain scientific principles and you might learn something by performing these experiments but they are not true scientific investigations and so do not make good Science Projects.

Consumer Testing: While consumer research and scientific research share many of the same process skills it is a good idea to avoid a Science Project with a topic such as "Which Brand of Paper Towel is the Best?" (And, no, it is not any better if you replace the words "Paper Towel" with "Laundry Detergent", "Dishwashing Soap" or any other product!)