

Congratulations on being selected from your Regional Fair to be an exhibitor at the **78th Georgia Science & Engineering Fair**. Advancing to the state competition is a great honor, and you are to be commended for your hard work and excellent research. Please review this handbook carefully with a teacher and parent. It contains important information that will help you prepare for GSEF and make it a great experience.

GSEF will take place **March 26–28, 2026** at The Classic Center in downtown Athens. Visit the GSEF website for the most up-to-date information about the GSEF event.

GSEF is an official affiliate of the Regeneron International Science & Engineering Fair (ISEF). To be eligible for competition at GSEF, all projects must adhere to the ISEF Rules & Guidelines for Pre-College Science Research.

GSEF Website

www.georgiacenter.uga.edu/gsef

ISEF Rules & Guidelines

www.societyforscience.org/isef/international-rules



**UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA**

GSEF is administered by the University of Georgia's Office of Academic Special Programs.

GEORGIA SCIENCE & ENGINEERING FAIR

EVENT HANDBOOK

MARCH 26-28, 2026

ATHENS, GA



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Dear Parents, Teachers, and Other Supporting Adults,

Congratulations to your student on being selected to advance to the Georgia Science & Engineering Fair in Athens, March 26-28, 2026. Thank you for supporting your student in their pursuit of success in STEM research. Being selected from a Regional Fair to advance to the state competition is a great honor, and these students are in for an exciting and challenging endeavor.

We want to make sure your student has everything they need to have a great GSEF experience. Please review this handbook with them for important information about the event.



Schedule Notes

See page 4 for full GSEF schedule and address. Students (“exhibitors”) are not required to bring a parent to GSEF; some schools or districts attend as groups. **Parking is limited**, so attendees are asked to carpool, use rideshare, or walk from local hotels.

Thursday, March 26

Exhibitors may set up their projects Thursday evening 5:30-8:30 p.m. **and/or** Friday morning 7:30-9:30 a.m. Setting up on Thursday allows more time to correct any Display & Safety issues. Family/friends are welcome in the hall during exhibit set-up.

Friday, March 27

Exhibitors may set up their projects Thursday evening 5:30-8:30 p.m. **and/or** Friday morning 7:30-9:30 a.m. Family/friends are welcome in the hall during exhibit set-up but must exit the hall by 9:30 a.m.

Exhibitors report for judging at 11:45 a.m.; **only exhibitors and judges are allowed in the hall during judging**. During this time, accompanying adults are invited to enjoy the town’s sights and activities or explore the UGA campus. Visit the many shops and restaurants in downtown Athens, walk to the Athens Welcome Center (280 E. Dougherty St.), enjoy a city tour (reserve at visitathensga.com), or tour the UGA campus (reserve at www.visit.uga.edu).

Exhibitors are at their projects on Friday from 11:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Please plan to meet your student when judging concludes at 5:30 p.m. Interviews occur throughout the afternoon and are not scheduled for specific times. Some Special Award judges arrive later in the day. For safety reasons and to ensure all judges have the opportunity to conduct all of their interviews, **exhibitors will not be released early**.

We request that parents, teachers, and other guests not be in The Classic Center building on Friday between 9:30 a.m. and 5:15 p.m. This courtesy protects the privacy and concentration of judges, who need to be able to move freely throughout the building and confer with other judges. It’s also out of consideration for other groups in the building who have reserved rooms, lobbies, and other areas.

Saturday, March 28

All are welcome to attend the public day from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. All students must be at their exhibits in the afternoon from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. It’s common for university faculty, the media, industry representatives, and other VIP to visit during this period. Students will line up at 3:30 p.m. for procession into the Awards Ceremony, which begins at 4:00 p.m. (see below).

Ways to Help Your Student

Complete all registration requirements.

To be eligible for GSEF, students must complete the following steps **within 3 days after being selected to advance from the Regional Fair**. (see [GSEF Registration Instructions](#))

1. Complete the online **GSEF Project Entry Form**.
2. Submit the **registration fee** to your Regional Fair (or online).
3. Submit the signed **GSEF Participation Agreement** and **research forms** to your Regional Fair Director.

Ensure emails are correct and accessible.

We’ll primarily use email to communicate with you and your student. Please note these tips to ensure you’re receiving updates:

- ▶ Please **don’t** use a **school system email address** for the student’s primary email, as it will likely block emails from GSEF. Gmail, yahoo, or other non-school addresses work best.
- ▶ Ensure email address in Project Entry Form is typed correctly.
- ▶ If your student isn’t receiving emails from GSEF, please have them **check their junk/spam folder** and then [contact us](#).

Review the rules and guidelines.

Please review the information in this handbook with your student, making special note of the following rules and policies:

- ▶ **Safety & Supervision Guidelines** on page 3.
- ▶ **Attendance Policy** on page 5.
- ▶ **Display & Safety Regulations** on pages 6-7.

Lodging & Parking

- ▶ Participants are responsible for their own hotel arrangements. Check with your school, district, or Regional Fair about whether they plan to handle lodging.
- ▶ **Book your hotel as early as possible.** The Athens Convention & Visitors Bureau has secured special rates at some hotels for GSEF attendees. Space is limited and blocks drop as early as Feb. 24. To make a reservation in these blocks, visit bit.ly/gsef2026housing.
- ▶ For other hotel options close to The Classic Center, see GSEF’s list of [Athens Area Hotels](#).
- ▶ The nearest parking decks are [The Classic Center deck](#) and the [Washington Street deck](#); there’s also on-street metered parking throughout downtown. **Parking can be limited**; attendees staying in nearby hotels are encouraged to walk or use rideshare. Groups arriving by bus must coordinate directly with The Classic Center for [Bus Parking](#) (note there’s a different form for [School Bus Parking](#)); **arrange bus parking as early as possible**.

Awards Ceremony

- ▶ The Awards Ceremony at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 28 is an exciting part of the event for exhibitors. **Student attendance is mandatory**. Guest attendance may be limited, but the ceremony will be livestreamed (see below). All exhibitors will be guaranteed one guest ticket, with an option to pick up additional tickets on a first-come, first-served basis. **Tickets will be distributed on-site at GSEF and cannot be reserved or claimed in advance.**
- ▶ Guests are invited to watch Georgia Public Broadcasting’s [livestream of the Awards Ceremony](#) in a big-screen viewing room on site or from anywhere on their own electronic devices.
- ▶ Some awards will be placed on the exhibits during the ceremony, so exhibits may not be removed until after the ceremony. Exhibits must be taken down immediately *after* the ceremony; any exhibits remaining after 8:00 p.m. will be disposed of by cleaning crew.
- ▶ Please be sure your student **knows their social security number**. They may need it to claim cash awards.

All adults (parents, teachers, chaperones, etc.) supporting a GSEF exhibitor, **please review the following with your student** regarding safety and supervision during the GSEF event.

The overall safety and proper supervision of all student participants is the top priority of the Georgia Science & Engineering Fair (GSEF) and our staff. All participants and parents/teachers/chaperones should understand and follow the guidelines below to ensure that participants are safe in their arrival at, participation in, and departure from GSEF events.

Actions if participants or parents/teachers/chaperones have any safety concerns or need assistance with a safety or security issue:

1) Come to the Help Desk inside the main entrance to the Exhibit Hall (Grand Hall 6) at The Classic Center.

2) Call the GSEF safety assistance line during GSEF hours at **706-201-9427***.

This number is only for safety issues, **not for questions about scheduling, judging, awards, or other GSEF topics. The individual answering this line cannot address issues that are not directly related to participant safety and security. For all non-safety issues, come to the Help Desk. The safety assistance line is only operational March 26-28, 2026; after March 28, call 706-542-6473 with any concerns.*

3) For an immediate security concern, you may also call The Classic Center Security Office at 706-357-4500. If appropriate, call 911.

The Classic Center facility is open to the public. During GSEF (Thursday 5:30 p.m. through Saturday 6:00 p.m.), the Exhibit Hall is controlled by GSEF staff during daytime events and secured overnight by The Classic Center security. The rest of The Classic Center is open to the public during daytime hours and is not controlled or monitored by GSEF staff.

There will be some event times when supervision of minors is the responsibility of parents/teachers/chaperones, and some event times when GSEF staff will supervise participants.

Parents/teachers/chaperones are required to maintain supervision during these GSEF events:

1) Thursday, March 26, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. – exhibit set-up

2) Friday, March 27, 7:30 - 9:30 a.m. – exhibit set-up

3) Saturday, March 28, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. – exhibitors optionally at Exhibits for Public Viewing Day

During these times, it is the responsibility of parents/teachers/chaperones to supervise participants during arrival, event participation, and departure from The Classic Center. On Thursday and Friday during exhibit set-up, GSEF staff will assist by providing oversight in the Exhibit Hall; only exhibitors and their families/teachers/chaperones should be in the hall. Non-GSEF affiliated personnel should not be in the Exhibit Hall on those days. On Saturday, the Exhibit Hall will be open to the public from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.; entry to the hall will not be restricted.

GSEF staff will maintain supervision during these times:

1) Friday, March 27, 11:45 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. – GSEF Judging

2) Saturday, March 28, 1:00 - 6:00 p.m. (or at conclusion of the Awards Ceremony) – Students required to be at exhibits for Public Viewing, followed by procession to and attendance at Awards Ceremony. Students will be released from the Awards Ceremony in the Theater and instructed to meet parent/teacher/chaperone outside the Theater (either in the Atrium or the Exhibit Hall).

During judging on Friday, only participants, GSEF staff, judges, and Classic Center staff will be allowed in the Exhibit Hall. GSEF staff will provide supervision and oversee safety for all participants. During the Friday afternoon break, participants may only go to the Atrium, hallway between the Atrium and the Exhibit Hall. During this break time, parents/teachers/chaperones are asked not to be in these areas; this is to better ensure the safety of all participants.

On Saturday, families and the general public are permitted in the Exhibit Hall from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. GSEF staff will provide oversight of the hall; any safety or security concerns should be brought to the Help Desk or Classic Center Security. From 3:00 p.m. until procession to the Theater, only participants, GSEF staff, and supporting Classic Center staff will be permitted in the Exhibit Hall. At 3:30 p.m., GSEF staff will escort participants to the Theater for the Awards Ceremony.

At the end of the GSEF events on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday afternoons, it is the responsibility of parents/teachers/chaperones to coordinate with participants to meet them inside The Classic Center for departure. **No participant should leave The Classic Center without their parent/teacher/chaperone.** Parents who would like their child to depart on their own must complete the [GSEF Departure Authorization Form](#). If participants or parents/teachers/chaperones are unable to connect with each other, come to the Help Desk for assistance.

Participants who knowingly violate the supervision and safety guidelines will face consequences, including: forfeiture of eligibility for awards and ISEF advancement, removal from this year's GSEF, or being barred from future GSEF events.

GSEF wants to ensure all participants and their families, teachers, and chaperones have a safe experience. These guidelines are intended to provide a safe exhibit area and ensure proper supervision at all times, especially during event departure.

All GSEF activities will take place at The Classic Center, 300 N. Thomas Street, Athens, GA 30601

thursday March 26

- 5:30 PM - **EARLY EXHIBIT SET-UP**
8:30 PM *The Classic Center Grand Halls*
Family and friends welcome. Exhibits may be set up Thursday evening and/or Friday morning but must be completely set up by 9:30 AM Friday.

friday March 27

- 7:30 AM - **EXHIBIT SET-UP**
9:30 AM *The Classic Center Grand Halls*
Family and friends welcome. Exhibits may be set up Thursday evening and/or Friday morning but must be completely set up by 9:30 AM Friday.

Everyone except judges and Display & Safety Committee must exit Exhibit Hall by 9:30 AM.
- 9:30 AM - **EXHIBITOR FREE TIME**
11:45 AM Exhibitors free for an early lunch, hotel check-in, shopping, etc. Return for judging at 11:45 AM.
- 9:30 AM - **PARENTS/CHAPERONES FREE TO EXPLORE ATHENS AND UGA**
5:30 PM Parents/chaperones are asked to remain clear of The Classic Center building after 9:30 AM today. Accompanying adults are encouraged to explore the shops and sights of downtown Athens and the University campus.
- 9:45 AM - **DISPLAY & SAFETY INSPECTION**
11:45 AM Only **official judges and GSEF staff** permitted in the Exhibit Hall. Your complete exhibit must be displayed. Electrical items that can be operated in an unattended mode should be turned on.
- 11:45 AM - **EXHIBITOR INTERVIEWS**
3:00 PM **ALL** Exhibitors must be at their projects. Exhibitors & Judges ONLY in the Exhibit Hall.
- 3:00 PM - **CONCESSION BREAK**
3:30 PM *The Classic Center Atrium*
Concessions provided. Please, no visitors (parents/teachers/chaperones) in the building during break.
- 3:30 PM - **EXHIBITOR INTERVIEWS**
5:30 PM **ALL** Exhibitors must be at their projects. Exhibitors & Judges ONLY in the Exhibit Hall. **Exhibitors will not be released early.**
- 5:30 PM **EXHIBITORS RELEASED**
Exhibitors and parents/chaperones are free to enjoy dinner and explore Athens. Exhibitors/parents/teachers/chaperones are not permitted in any part of the building at any time this evening.

saturday March 28

- 9:00 AM - **EXHIBIT HALL OPEN TO PUBLIC**
3:00 PM *The Classic Center Grand Halls*
Family, friends, press, and public welcome.
- 1:00 PM - **EXHIBITORS AT PROJECTS**
3:00 PM *The Classic Center Grand Halls*
All Exhibitors must at their projects to answer questions from public attendees. Family, friends, press, and public welcome.
- 3:30 PM **EXHIBITORS LINE UP IN EXHIBIT HALL**
The Classic Center Grand Hall
All Exhibitors must be present. Follow all instructions from GSEF staff.
- 4:00 PM - **AWARDS CEREMONY**
6:00 PM *The Classic Center Theatre*
Exhibitors must be present or forfeit awards. Exhibits may not be removed until conclusion of ceremony.

Guests (parents, teachers, chaperones) must have a **ticket** to enter the Awards Ceremony. More details about tickets will be released closer to the event.

A Livestream of the Awards Ceremony will be available for viewing on devices or in a big-screen viewing room on site.
- 6:00 PM - **PROJECT TEARDOWN**
8:00 PM *The Classic Center Grand Halls*
After the Awards Ceremony, parents/chaperones should plan to meet students at their exhibits. Exhibits must be removed between 6:00 - 8:00 PM. Exhibits left after 8:00 PM will be removed by the clean-up crew.
- 6:30 PM - **ISEF PARTICIPANT MEETING**
7:00 PM *The Classic Center Theatre Stage, Backstage*
For **all** ISEF 2026 delegates (those selected from their Regional Fair **and** those selected at GSEF): Report backstage immediately after the Awards Ceremony to take a group photo and receive important information about ISEF 2026.

Please review the **GSEF Attendance Policy** on page 5 and the **Safety & Supervision Guidelines** on page 3 of this document.

See page 2 for info about location, parking, lodging, the Awards Ceremony, and additional information for chaperones and other attendees.

Eligibility & How to Register

To be eligible for GSEF, students must be selected to advance from a [Regional Fair](#) and complete the following steps **within 3 days following the Regional Fair**. (see [GSEF Registration Instructions](#))

1. Complete the online **GSEF Project Entry Form**.
2. Submit the **registration fee** to your Regional Fair (or pay online).
3. Submit **Participation Agreement** and **research forms** to your Regional Fair.

Attendance, Conduct, & Scientific Integrity

All students must follow the **Attendance Policy** (at right) and the **Code of Conduct** detailed in the [GSEF Participation Agreement](#).

The Georgia Science & Engineering Fair upholds the Society for Science's [principles of scientific integrity](#) and [Ethics Statement](#). Student researchers and their supporting adults are expected to hold themselves to the highest ethical standards and adhere to principles of honesty, transparency, and objectivity.

Dress

It is recommended that exhibitors dress professionally for judging and the Awards Ceremony. Casual dress is appropriate for project set-up.

Setting Up Your Project

The week of March 23, a list of **exhibit ID numbers** will be emailed to students, parents, and teachers. Please check this list to find and memorize your exhibit ID number. This number will be your assigned space in the Exhibit Hall.

Ensure your exhibit adheres to all **Display & Safety Regulations** (see pg. 6) and that you have included all required forms (see below). Common violations include:

- **CREDITS:** Every photograph, graph, table, chart, and image must have a source credit associated with it, visible somewhere on the front of the board or on a 'table tent' (e.g., "All photographs taken by John Smith")
- **UNOFFICIAL ABSTRACTS:** No unofficial abstracts are allowed, including any paragraph or section on the board titled "Abstract" followed by anything other than an Official Abstract form.
- **PROHIBITED ITEMS:** Some materials such as liquid, food, glass, dirt, sand, or glass are not allowed at the exhibit. See regulations for complete list.

Exhibit Set-Up: You may set up Thursday evening 5:30-8:30 p.m. *and/or* Friday morning 7:30-9:30 a.m. Setting up on Thursday allows more time to correct Display & Safety violations. After you are set up, sign your Exhibit ID card and you may leave. Return to the Exhibit Hall **at 11:45 a.m. Friday** for judging. Until then, you are free to relax, eat an early lunch, or explore UGA/downtown Athens. Non-exhibitors *will not* be permitted in Exhibit Hall Friday from 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

What to Bring

Bring your exhibit and *photocopies* (not originals) of all forms in a 3-ring binder. **We might not have copies of your forms at GSEF**, so bring everything with you.

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| REQUIRED FORMS TO BRING: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Official Abstract Form |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Form 1: Checklist for Adult Sponsor |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Form 1A: Student Checklist |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research Plan/Post-Project Summary |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Form 1B: Approval Form |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forms 1C through 7 as required for your research |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If photo of anyone other than exhibitor is displayed: Signed release statement from the individual in photo |

Optional Items: Original log book and research paper (recommended but not required), bottle of water (must be kept in bag under table at all times), book, homework, *silent* entertainment. **Recommended: Know your Social Security Number!** Some cash awards require forms that need your SSN.

GSEF ATTENDANCE POLICY

To ensure a fair, equitable, and orderly competition experience for all students, and to respect the time and efforts of volunteer judges and sponsors, exhibitors must attend the entire GSEF event. This includes exhibit set-up during either Thursday evening or Friday morning set-up periods, the full judging session on Friday, and the Saturday Awards Ceremony (see details below). For safety reasons and to ensure all judges have the opportunity to conduct their interviews, **exhibitors, including team members, will not be released early from judging.** Failure to attend the entire GSEF event may result in disqualification or revocation of honors and awards.

No exceptions will be granted for conflicts with other events or activities, including academic or athletic competitions, social events such as weddings and proms, family or school travel commitments, or cultural events such as art shows, concerts, or performances. Students and their families must decide together which events will take priority. We realize these other events are important to you and that some of you will have to make difficult decisions about which event you want to attend. Notify GSEF immediately if you have been selected for GSEF but decide not to participate.

Exceptions may be granted only for serious medical situations, such as scheduled chemotherapy or dialysis, and for certain religious prohibitions, such as observant Jews who cannot travel on the Sabbath. Notify GSEF early.

Team Attendance

For Team projects, all members must register and pay the registration fee. Teams may be represented at GSEF by one or more members; however, judges have the option not to consider a Team if they have not had the chance to interview all members. If a Team project advances to ISEF, all members must attend ISEF. Attempts to register a Team project as an Individual may result in disqualification.

Awards Ceremony Attendance

Any student who misses the Awards Ceremony may be ineligible for awards, including scholarships, ISEF Trips, Grand Awards, the Pinnacle Award, and sponsored awards. This is out of respect and appreciation for the event and award sponsors, many of whom wish to attend or view the live ceremony and see the winners accept the awards on stage. Some sponsors travel long distances to meet the winners and take publicity photos with them, in which case absences can be disappointing and may affect future sponsorships. The absent student may still be eligible for "honors" and some unsponsored awards, provided the substitute policy (below) is followed.

Substitutes

No substitutes are permitted during judging.

A student who cannot attend the entire Awards Ceremony may designate another student exhibitor to come to the stage at the time the absent student's name is called and accept unsponsored awards on the absent student's behalf. The substitute's photo will be taken with the award, and if the photo is published, it will bear the name of the winner. Parents and teachers may not collect awards on behalf of students. GSEF does not record the names of substitutes, nor is GSEF responsible for the substitute's handling of the award after acceptance. If the award includes a monetary prize, the substitute must get the award paperwork to the winner to sign and return to GSEF within ten days. Awards unclaimed at the ceremony are forfeited.

Exhibit Removal

Exhibits may not be removed until after the Awards Ceremony. Some awards are placed on exhibits during the ceremony. If an exhibit is removed early, honors ribbons and certain other awards will be forfeited.

All exhibits must adhere to the following regulations and pass a Display & Safety (D&S) inspection to qualify for competition at GSEF. Knowledge of these regulations is the responsibility of the student and supporting adult(s). D&S Committee members will offer guidance during project set-up; students may be required to make revisions to their exhibits to conform to D&S regulations.

Scientific Integrity: Students are expected to act with honor and integrity when conducting and presenting scientific research and in interacting with their peer community. Scientific fraud and misconduct are prohibited at all levels of research and competition. Students must not fabricate data or images, plagiarize, or present someone else's work as their own. Students must differentiate their own work from the work of others and cite sources. Students must respect confidentiality and intellectual property.

For situations not addressed here, the [ISEF Rules for Pre-College Science Research](#) and [ISEF Display & Safety Regulations](#) apply.

DISPLAY REGULATIONS

Maximum Size of Project

| | | |
|------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Max Depth | (front to back) | 30 inches |
| Max Width | (side to side) | 48 inches |
| Max Height | (tabletop to top) | 72 inches |

Projects must be exhibited on the tabletop. No part of a GSEF exhibit may be placed on the floor or under the table. All project materials, supports, equipment, and demonstrations must be contained on the tabletop. Exhibits do not have to be trifold boards; pull-ups and pop-ups are allowed if within allowed dimensions.

Official Abstract

The complete, unaltered 8.5x11 Official GSEF Abstract Form is the only abstract that may be displayed. It must be displayed vertically at the project booth, preferably by taping it to hang from the front edge of the table. It is acceptable, but not preferred, to incorporate the form on the exhibit board or to stand it in a document frame (no glass). **You may not use the title "Abstract" for any section on your exhibit unless it contains only the Official Abstract Form** (not just the abstract text).

Required Forms in Binder and on Display

Bring **photocopies** (not originals - keep those at home in a safe place) of all other required forms to GSEF. Arrange them in order in a **3-ring binder** placed on the table. Required forms include:

- **Form 1:** Checklist for Adult Sponsor
- **Form 1A:** Student Checklist
- **Research Plan/Project Summary**
- **Form 1B:** Approval Form
- **Forms 1C through 7** as required for your project*

Optional items such as research paper may be included in binder.

*If your project requires **Form 1C (Regulated Research Institution)** or **Form 7 (Continuations)**, these forms must be **taped to the front of your table** or otherwise **vertically displayed** (like the Abstract form).

Log Book & Other Items on Tabletop

Although GSEF regulations do not require a bound logbook, judges like to see this item, and it is highly recommended. Your logbook should be on the table. Other items may include a photo album of the work, previous logbooks for Continuation projects, and items necessary to demonstrate the science if the board and binder are not sufficient, provided these items do not violate any other D&S Regulations.

Continuations (see [ISEF rules](#), p. 4)

A project that is a continuation of a previous year's work must be about the student's new work for this year, with minimal reference to the previous research. It is preferred for the project title or subtitle to mention which year the project is; e.g., "Year 2." Longitudinal studies may present only conclusionary data from prior years. Continuation projects must have Form 7 taped to front of table.

Human Informed Consent/Assent Forms

Completed informed consent/assent for a human participant study are **NOT** to be displayed and should **NOT** be present at the exhibit. A

sample (incomplete) form may be included in the binder. (Note: This applies only to the forms signed by the research participants. Form 4 **is** required to be in the binder for all human participants projects.)

Displayed Graphs, Tables, Images, & Photos

CREDITS: Every photograph, image, chart, table, graph, and figure must have a credit or citation, including those made by the exhibitor and those taken from the internet, journals, and books. The credit must state who created the graph/chart/table, who took the photograph, or where a photo or image came from. For example: "All photographs by John Kim," or "Image from www.wherever.com." Credit lines may be placed next to each item or elsewhere on the exhibit. If all graphs/images were created by the exhibitor or are from the same source, one clearly visible credit line for all items is sufficient.

All graphs and charts created by Mary Smith

PHOTOGRAPH RELEASE: Photos/videos of people other than the exhibitor are not allowed unless a signed photo release is provided. If the person is under 18, parent/guardian signature is required. Sample text: "I consent to the use of this visual image involving my participation/my child's participation in this research." There is no official form for this.

CONTENT: Photos or images on exhibit must not be deemed insensitive, offensive or inappropriate (e.g., no surgery, necrosis or dissection) by any member of the SRC, the Display & Safety Committee or GSEF staff. The decision made by any of these groups is final.

Mentor's Work / Acknowledgements

The mentor's name and institution may NOT appear anywhere on the exhibit except in an optional acknowledgements section and on Form 1C. Only minimal reference to a mentor's or another researcher's work is allowable and must only reflect background information or be used to clarify differences between finalist's and others' work.

Audio/Video or Multi-Media Displays

Audio and/or video displays for non-computer science projects are discouraged unless they are *necessary* to demonstrate the science. Judges are not required to view them. Displays must be under 30 seconds, with 15 seconds preferred. GSEF is not responsible for equipment theft.

Electricity at Project

Exhibitors who wish to have electricity at their exhibit must submit the [Electricity Request Form](#) and \$100 fee with registration. Electricity should only be used for projects that require it to demonstrate the research (e.g., computer science and engineering projects). If electricity is approved, an outlet will be provided within nine feet of the exhibit. The exhibitor must bring an approved extension cord. Attempts to connect to an outlet without approval may result in disqualification.

Replacement of Disqualified Items

If a GSEF representative requests an object or item be removed from a project booth and that item is returned to the booth without specific permission from the GSEF Director, the project may be disqualified.

Continued on next page →

SAFETY REGULATIONS

Lighting

Lighting will not be approved for decorative purposes but may be approved if necessary to demonstrate the science. The electricity fee (\$100) must be submitted with registration. Bulb and fixture must not pose risk of injury if touched. Cool LED light is preferred. Incandescent, halogen and other warm light sources must be caged, encased, or otherwise protected so that 1) it is not possible to burn a person or item with any part of the apparatus, bulb, fixture, or casing, and 2) no glass can escape if the bulb is accidentally broken.

All other [ISEF Display & Safety Rules](#) regarding electricity must be followed. If you are using electricity, please be sure to read the complete rules thoroughly and follow them precisely.

Stability

All parts of the exhibit must be stable. Particular care must be taken with tall or heavy displays to ensure that they cannot tip over onto participants, judges, or guests.

Lasers

Lasers may be used only when they follow the [ISEF Display & Safety Rules](#). GSEF staff may revoke the privilege and require lasers to be removed if careless or indiscriminate use is observed. Offenses may result in disqualification.

Laptops/Tablets

If you are bringing a laptop or other device, consider investing in a security device such as a locking cable system to secure your item at the exhibit. GSEF and the exhibit hall venue will take measures to discourage theft/damage to exhibits or parts of exhibits, including electronics, but is ultimately not responsible should theft or damage occur.

Other Safety Policies

GSEF staff and/or the Display & Safety Committee reserve the right to remove any item or entire project at their discretion for safety reasons or to protect the integrity of the GSEF and its rules and regulations.

The Following Items Are NOT ALLOWED at Exhibits

Not Allowed Per Safety Regulations:

- **Living or dead organisms**, including fungi, animals, plants and microorganisms
- **Taxidermy specimens, parts, pelts**
- **Preserved vertebrate or invertebrate animals** or animal parts, including cells
- Human or animal **food** of any kind
- Human or animal **parts or body fluids** (e.g., bones, urine, blood)
- **Plant materials** including potpourri, grain, birdseed, spices, leaves, flowers, logs, branches, etc. Plastic or other inorganic replicas or photographs should be used instead. (Exception: manufactured construction materials used in building the project or display)
- **Soil, sand, rock, cement, or waste** samples, even if permanently encased in acrylic
- **All chemicals**, including water.
- **All liquids, gels, powders, and creams** (e.g., shampoo, sunscreen, salt, soap, agar, etc.)
- **Dry ice** or other sublimating solids
- **Hazardous substances or devices** (e.g. poisons, drugs, firearms, weapons, ammunition, reloading devices, grease/oil and sublimating solids such as dry ice, etc.)
- **Sharp items** (e.g. syringes, needles, pipettes, knives)
- **Flames or highly flammable materials**
- **Glass** or glass objects unless deemed by the Display & Safety Committee to be an integral and necessary part of the project (e.g., glass that is an integral part of a computer screen)
- **Any apparatus with belts, pulleys, chains, or moving parts** with tension or pinch points that are not fully immobilized or shielded
- **Batteries** with open-top cells or wet cells
- **Drones or any flight-capable apparatus** unless propulsion power source is removed
- **3D printers** unless power source is removed
- Any apparatus or item deemed unsafe by any member of the SRC, the Display & Safety Committee, judges, or the GSEF staff (e.g., vacuum tubes or dangerous ray-generating devices, pressurized or empty tanks that previously contained combustibles, etc.)

Not Allowed Per Display Regulations:

- Any **self-promotions** or **external endorsements**, including:
 - **Commercial logos**, unless deemed integral to the project by the Display & Safety Committee.
 - Any reference to **mentor or research institution**, except in Form 1C and an optional acknowledgment section of the exhibit.
 - Any reference to **patent status** of the project.
 - Awards, medals, flags.
- **Give-away items or handouts** such as flyers, pens, postcards, business cards, etc.
- **URLs** (other than those used solely to cite the sources of photos/figures), **QR codes, postal addresses, email addresses, social media handles, phone numbers** of any exhibitor or their school or research institution.
- **Active internet connections.** No part of the project may require internet connectivity to view.
- Reference to past work on the exhibit must be limited to summative past conclusory data and its comparison to the current year data set. No raw data from previous years may be displayed; however, it may be included in a logbooks and/or binder if clearly labeled, e.g. "Year 1."



No changes, modifications, or additions to projects may be made after approval by the Display & Safety Committee.

Exhibitors who do not adhere to this regulation will fail to qualify for competition.

The GSEF judging process emphasizes the student's ability to discuss the project effectively during the interview, as well as the project's demonstration of originality, creativity, imagination, discovery, and inventiveness. Exhibits serve two functions: 1) to present the research clearly when the student is not present, and 2) to guide the interview toward an in-depth discussion. Judges may examine the student notebook (3-ring binder preferred), which should include research forms (see below) and optional items such as a research paper.

All exhibits must adhere to the **GSEF Display & Safety Regulations** (pg. 6-7).

| JUNIOR DIVISION (Grades 6-8) | Most Projects | Engineering Projects (and some math, computer science) |
|--|---|--|
| | I. SCIENTIFIC THOUGHT (10 pts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear purpose • Testable using scientific methods • Variables and controls defined, appropriate, complete • Systematic data collection and analysis • Conclusions based solely and directly on the collected data | I. ENGINEERING GOALS (10 pts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear problem or need to be solved • Clear criteria for proposed solution • Identification of a solution • Development of prototype that demonstrates intended design, has been tested, demonstrates engineering skill |
| | II. CREATIVITY (5 pts) • project demonstrates significant creativity/originality/inventiveness | |
| III. PRESENTATION (5 pts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is interested and professional • Can clearly explain the logic, purpose, procedures, and conclusions of the project • Information in exhibit is presented in an orderly manner, with clear data and results • Student has "ownership" of the topic and project | | |

| SENIOR DIVISION (Grades 9-12) | Most Projects | Engineering Projects (and some math, computer science) | | |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| | I. RESEARCH QUESTION (10 pts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear and focused purpose • identifies contribution to field of study | I. RESEARCH PROBLEM (10 pts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • description of a practical need or problem to be solved • definition of criteria for proposed solution | | |
| | II. DESIGN & METHODOLOGY (15 pts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • well-designed plan and data collection methods • variables and controls defined, appropriate and complete | II. DESIGN & METHODOLOGY (15 pts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploration of alternatives to answer need or problem • identification of a solution • development of a prototype/model | | |
| | III. EXECUTION: Data Collection, Analysis & Interpretation (20 pts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • systematic data collection and analysis • reproducibility of results • appropriate application of mathematical and statistical methods • sufficient data collected to support interpretation and conclusions | III. EXECUTION: Construction & Testing (20 pts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prototype demonstrates intended design • prototype has been tested in multiple conditions/trials • prototype demonstrates engineering skill and completeness | | |
| | IV. CREATIVITY (20 pts) • project demonstrates significant creativity/originality/inventiveness in one or more of the above criteria | | | |
| V. PRESENTATION (35 pts) <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <u>Poster (10 pts):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • logical organization of material • clarity of graphics and legends • supporting documentation well selected and displayed </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <u>Interview (25 pts):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear, concise, thoughtful responses to questions • understanding of basic science relevant to project • understanding of interpretation and limitations of results and conclusions • degree of independence in conducting project • recognition of potential impact in science, society and/or economics • quality of ideas for further research • for team projects, contributions to and understanding of project by all members </td> </tr> </table> | | | <u>Poster (10 pts):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • logical organization of material • clarity of graphics and legends • supporting documentation well selected and displayed | <u>Interview (25 pts):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear, concise, thoughtful responses to questions • understanding of basic science relevant to project • understanding of interpretation and limitations of results and conclusions • degree of independence in conducting project • recognition of potential impact in science, society and/or economics • quality of ideas for further research • for team projects, contributions to and understanding of project by all members |
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REQUIRED RESEARCH FORMS All projects (grades 6-12) must follow the [ISEF Rules & Guidelines](#) and have all required [forms and approvals](#).

Forms required for ALL projects:

- Official GSEF Abstract Form
- Form 1: Checklist for Adult Sponsor
- Form 1A: Student Checklist
- Research Plan/Project Summary
- Form 1B: Approval Form

Photocopies of all required research forms must be displayed at the exhibit at GSEF, preferably in a 3-ring binder.

Please keep originals at home or in another safe place.

Additional forms required for certain types projects:

- Form 1C: Regulated Research Institution** - research done in hospital, university, lab, or setting other than home, school, or field
- Form 2: Qualified Scientist** - some research involving human participants, vertebrate animals, potentially hazardous biological agents, or DEA-controlled substances
- Form 3: Risk Assessment** - research involving hazardous chemicals, activities, devices, or DEA-controlled substances, some human participants projects, and some potentially hazardous biological agents projects
- Form 4: Human Participants** - research involving human participants
- Forms 5A/5B: Vertebrate Animals** - research involving vertebrate animals
- Form 6A: Potentially Hazardous Biological Agents** and **6B: Human/Animal Tissue** - research involving microorganisms, rDNA, tissue, blood, bodily fluid. 6B also required if research involves fresh or frozen tissue, cells, blood, bodily fluid
- Form 7: Continuation** - projects that continue or expand upon a previous year's work

Most other questions are answered on the GSEF website (www.georgiacenter.uga.edu/gsef) or in the ISEF Rules & Guidelines (www.societyforscience.org/isef/international-rules).

Am I required to attend the entire GSEF event?

- ▶ Students must attend the entire judging period on Friday and the Awards Ceremony on Saturday.
- ▶ No exceptions are made for schedule conflicts. This includes academic or athletic competitions, social events such as weddings and proms, travel plans, performances, concerts, etc. We realize these other events are important and that some of you will have to make hard decisions about which event you want to attend. Notify us promptly if you have been selected for GSEF but decide not to participate.
- ▶ Exceptions may be granted for serious medical situations, such as chemotherapy or dialysis, and for certain religious prohibitions, such as observant Jews who cannot travel on the Sabbath. Notify us early.
- ▶ Teams may be represented by one or more members; however, individual judges have the freedom not to consider a team if they have not had the opportunity to meet and interview all members.

Why haven't I received my GSEF confirmation email?

- ▶ We may not have processed your registration yet. It can take several weeks for your materials to make it from your Regional Fair into the GSEF system.
- ▶ It may have gone to your 'Junk Mail' folder.
- ▶ The **email address** in your GSEF registration materials may have been **incorrect or blocked by your school system**. In this case, it is your responsibility to contact us (GSEF@uga.edu).

How do I know what forms I need?

- ▶ Everyone needs an Abstract, Forms 1, 1A, 1B, and Research Plan.
- ▶ Depending on the type of research you plan to do, you may need additional forms. Use the **Rules Wizard** (<https://ruleswizard.societyforscience.org>) to determine this. If your project will involve interaction with other people, animals, bacteria, or tissues, you will very likely need more forms.

What do you mean I "used an old form" or "followed the old rules"?

- ▶ You must use the current year's (2026) forms and know this year's schedule and rules. They can be found on the GSEF website (www.georgiacenter.uga.edu/gsef) or the ISEF website (www.societyforscience.org/isef/forms). Always get your forms and instructions from GSEF – don't rely on previous years' information!

Are GSEF rules the same as ISEF rules?

Mostly, but here are a few exceptions; refer to website for more:

- ▶ GSEF prefers to receive PHOTOCOPIES of your forms. You must also have **your own set of photocopies** in a binder at your exhibit.
- ▶ GSEF requires EVERY EXHIBITOR to submit a signed GSEF Participation Agreement.
- ▶ GSEF exhibits must fit on top of a table 48" w x 30" d and have a maximum height of 72 inches. ISEF allows exhibits that stand on the floor or use additional space under the table, but NO floor space may be used at GSEF.

What are the expectations for different ages?

- ▶ Grades 6-10 are learning experimentation and correlation. They may: 1) take some action on one group and compare the results to a control group, or 2) observe how something influences or correlates with something else. Examples: Does [my idea] decrease the pollution in this stream? Is this protein always present when X happens?
- ▶ Grades 11-12 should be able to analyze their data to show its significance. They should consider how their research can potentially benefit society or the environment. Some projects may be moving toward inventing something new and useful, making a new discovery, or pushing the boundaries of current knowledge.

What can get me "kicked out" of GSEF?

- ▶ Presenting someone else's work as your own.
- ▶ Refusing to follow instructions of GSEF staff or judges.
- ▶ Failure to follow the GSEF Code of Conduct or Attendance Policy.
- ▶ Violation of GSEF Display & Safety Regulations.

What are the most common PAPERWORK errors?

- ▶ Failure to do the forms that must be done **before** starting on your research project.
- ▶ Missing signatures or missing forms.

What are the most common RESEARCH errors?

- ▶ Insufficient data due to small sample size or too few replications/repetitions.
- ▶ Having a conclusion that does not directly derive from your data. Or collecting the wrong type of data - data that cannot support or disprove your stated hypothesis/purpose.

What are the most common DISPLAY & SAFETY errors?

- ▶ Forgetting to display credits for every photo, chart, and graph, even your own.
- ▶ Including an *unofficial* abstract on the board. Only the unaltered 8.5x11 Official Abstract Form may be displayed.
- ▶ Showing people in photos or videos without having their signed release at the exhibit.
- ▶ Glass. Followed by food (including spices, candy, salt), seeds, powders, gels, liquids, wax, chemicals, teeth, blood stains, heat sources, pinch points, sharps, sand, plant or animal matter (dead or alive), exposed electrical connections.
- ▶ Exceeding allowed dimensions (school, regional, GSEF and ISEF fairs may all have different requirements).

Is a Best in Category award given in every category?

- ▶ Not always. Some categories may not have a Best in Category award in any given year. Awards are given only if the judges feel that there are exhibits of exceptional quality in the category.

What kinds of projects usually win top awards?

- ▶ Projects that discover something that we did not already know – especially if that information is useful in some way.
- ▶ Projects based on solid and sufficient data that is processed accurately and presented clearly.
- ▶ Many - but not all! - top winners in Senior Division have the guidance of a research professional in their field.

My friend was interviewed three times and I was interviewed eight times. Why?

- ▶ Some of the people talking with you may not have been judges. Members of the press and GSEF staff members often stop to talk with exhibitors, even though they do not "score" the project.
- ▶ Judges who have completed all their assigned interviews may chat with students whose projects interest them but whom they are not assigned to judge.
- ▶ Your topic may fit with a particular Special Award that happens to have sent lots of judges.

How many Georgia projects advance to ISEF?

- ▶ Typically, four projects and sometimes one observer advance from GSEF, and about 35 students advance from ISEF-affiliated Regional Fairs. GSEF's ISEF delegates are selected without regard to category.