

Tips for County Fair Judges

Following are some tips for judging county fair computer exhibits:

1. Judges can't make the world equal. Kids have access to different equipment, printers and help at home. Respect every child's efforts.
2. The 4-H computer materials are skill-based, not grade-based. So, age appropriateness is less important in these exhibits – although you would expect the work of a high school student to be more complete and sophisticated than the work of a fourth grader.
3. Exhibitors should indicate type of hardware and software that was used to create the exhibit. Youth should also indicate steps involved in creating the entry.
4. Any exhibit that shows something as "enhanced" with a computer should show at least a thumbnail picture of the original item.
5. When judging web sites, look for overall coherence. Does it flow from screen to screen, web page to web page? Do the pages look like they go together? Is the site easy to follow and easy to get around? Is the language appropriate? Did the exhibitor avoid garish colors, spelling errors, and links that don't work? Is the site free of inappropriate links: adult material, inappropriate advertising, etc? Are the images an appropriate size so they download quickly? Has the site been tested on various platforms before it was posted?
6. Copyright and trademark issues are necessary to address with any exhibitor at a county fair, but extremely important when it comes to web sites. Users can get into trouble with the law if they abuse the laws designed to protect the creative work of others. Users must receive permission to use copyrighted and trademarked graphics, logos and other materials first, and then must give credit where credit is due.
7. If the exhibitor has created an "official" 4-H web site, the clover must be used properly. Usage is protected under 18 U.S.C. 707, which requires correct color, size, clover stem, and statute statement. The U.S. Code also says the clover cannot be used as a watermark. If the exhibitor does not use the official 4-H clover (H's in the clovers), then the rules do not apply. Also check for use of the UW-Extension logo on the home page of official 4-H web sites.
8. Check for personal safety infractions on web sites. People's names, addresses, and phone numbers should not be used. Pictures of children should not be identified.
9. Programming exhibits (flow charts, diagrams) should show a portion of the program code used, objectives/goals of the program, type of software used, and whether or not the program now works. Ask the exhibitor: if you were to do this over, what would you do differently?
10. Spreadsheets, databases and reports should be readable, logical and easy to follow. Look for proper alignment of data and decimals. Any heads and subheads should be clear.

11. Graphics, banners, greeting cards and other computer-generated graphics: look for originality and creativity. Are the parts proportional? Will the exhibit work as it is intended? If the work is based on a copy, how much has the original been changed? Make sure the exhibitor lists the program used to make each item.
12. Word processing exhibits: check the design, formatting and readability of the finished pieces. Is the grammar correct?