Getting Started (for the student)

First you need to **pick a topic**. Spend time thinking about what you want to study. You can get your ideas from hobbies, current events or anything that is unclear and you have questions about. Be sure your topic is not so broad that you can't research it as a science project. Try to formulate a question and keep in mind the **scientific method**.

Then you need to **research your topic**. Go to the library; first check general reference material, then more specific books. If you have access to Internet it can also be a link to excellent resource material. You might consider talking to people who are specialists in the area of your project; be sure to leave lots of time, especially if you need to write to them. If you plan to do an experiment you will also need to get the necessary equipment.

Now it will be necessary to **organize your information** and check for missing or unclear information. Make a timetable so you won't be short of time. If you plan to have an experiment leave yourself enough time.

The Scientific Method

Hypothesis: The problem you will be solving or the purpose for doing the project.

Procedure: What you did for the project. It must be clear enough that someone else could do exactly what you did and get the same results.

Results: What you found out by doing the research.

Discussion: Describe why the results were the way they were. Explain any odd occurrences and say why expected results turned out the way they did.

Conclusion: Why/how is what you found out important?

Acknowledgments: Now is the time to thank everyone that helped on this project!

Once you have background information, a timetable and your experiment; **check it all with your teacher** or some other supervisor to make sure it is reasonable.

Now go ahead and **finish your research**. You will need to write a report summarizing your results and drawing conclusions and showing their relevance.

The next step is to **display your results**. The display must be neat and uncluttered, yet provide enough information for everyone to make sense of it. Everything must be simple and easy to understand. You should be able to talk freely about the project. A good rule is that if you can't explain it to your grandparents then it still needs work.

The display can make your project stand out and get the information out to everyone. Some colour will make the project stand out, but don't overdue it and distract your audience from the project. You also need to remember that the display is not the project, it is only the means to show it.

The important information should be included on the display. Come up with a simple yet catchy title for your project and put it in a prominent location on the display. Include the hypothesis, methods, results, discussion and conclusion. Make sure you thank the people who helped with the project!

You need to have a stable free-standing backboard to show the project. Check around your home and find materials that you can use. Plywood, chloroplast from greenhouses or other rigid materials will work. The panels need to be taped or hinged securely so your backboard does not fall over. You can use colored paper or paint or old wallpaper to fancy up the display. Be innovative and find the most appropriate material for your project. **Cardboard is okay for the school and regional fairs, but it is not allowed at the Canada Wide Science Fair - it is too flammable if there is a fire.**

The maximum size display allowed is 1.2 metres wide; 0.8 metres deep; and 3.5 metres high from the floor. The display size that you select should be suitable for your project. There should be about 40% blank space on the display to keep it from being too cluttered.

The report is a write up of what you did. Keep it neat and about three double-spaced pages with a cover page on it. The cover page should have your title centered on it with your name, school, class and date on separate lines at the bottom right of the page. Remember that you should also be able to **verbally present** your project. Spend time going over your presentation with other students, parents, siblings and anyone else that will listen. You will gain confidence and have fun sharing your newfound knowledge!