Science fair presentation script: a 60-second talk in five lines

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A science fair presentation script kids can say in a minute: five lines, filled in for a real project at three ages, plus how to practise against a clock and a judge.

A science fair presentation script is five lines a child can say in about a minute: my question; what I changed and what I kept the same; what I found, with a number; what surprised me; and what I'd test next. That's it. Said while pointing at the board, it answers most of what a judge was going to ask, and it leaves the rest of the visit for the judge's own questions.

I built a 60-second talk builder into Peabody's judge practice page. It makes the five lines from a child's kept project and their own numbers, reads them out loud, times them against a minute and prints them on a card. Here's the script, filled in at three ages.

Why a minute

A judge doesn't stay long. One district that publishes its judging procedures (Alpine School District, Utah, read 31 October 2026) judges every project twice in a 45-minute period, and its example says a judge with ten projects has four to five minutes with each. A minute of talk leaves three for questions.

Peabody's builder checks the talk against 160 words, which is about a minute at a nervous child's pace.

The five lines

1. My question was: the project's question, word for word from the board's title.
2. I changed… and I kept… the same. The one thing changed, two things kept the same, and how many tries at each level.
3. I found that… The biggest and smallest mean, or the first and last, with the unit. Point at the graph while saying it.
4. The surprise. One of three: it went the way I guessed; one thing surprised me; or something went wrong at first, so I fixed it and tried again.
5. Next time I would… The second thing to test.

A filled-in script: 4th to 6th grade

Project: Does a bigger parachute fall slower? (3rd–8th grade). The numbers are made up for the example.

My question was: does a bigger parachute fall slower?

I changed the size of the parachute: 20, 30 and 40 centimetres square. I kept the same weight hanging underneath and the same drop height every time. I did three tries at each size.

I found that the biggest mean was 3.4 seconds, for the 40 centimetre parachute. The smallest was 1.9 seconds, for the 20 centimetre one. As the parachutes got bigger, they took longer to fall.

One thing surprised me: the big one swung from side to side a lot.

Next time I would keep the 30 centimetre parachute and hang 2, 4 and 6 paper clips, then graph both tests.

That's 112 words: comfortably inside a minute, even slowly. The last line is the project's own "going further" test, which is the line Peabody's builder uses.

A younger version: 1st to 3rd grade

Project: Which boat shape carries the most pennies? (1st–5th grade).

My question was: which boat shape carries the most pennies? I made a flat raft, a square box and a round bowl out of foil, all from the same size of foil, and I added the pennies one at a time. I tried each one three times. The square box carried the most pennies, 24 in its middle try. It went the way I guessed. Next time I would make the sides higher.

Shorter sentences, a middle try instead of a mean, and one number. That's right for this age.

An older version: 7th and 8th grade

Project: Does a longer string swing slower? (4th–8th grade).

My question was: does a longer string swing slower? I changed the length of the string, 20, 40 and 60 centimetres, and kept the same weight and the same starting distance out to the side. I counted swings for 15 seconds, three tries at each length. The mean went from 16.7 swings at 20 centimetres down to 9.3 at 60, so tripling the length nearly halved the swings. Something went wrong at first: I was pushing the weight instead of letting go, so I started again and let it drop. Next I'd keep 40 centimetres and change the weight, to see if heavier swings faster.

Older students add the size of the effect ("nearly halved") and an honest note about the method. Judges at that age listen for both.

How to practise

- Say it to the board, not the card. Point at the question, then the steps, then the graph. The board is the prompt.
- Time it. The builder times each run against a minute. If it's over, cut words from line 2, not from line 3: the numbers are the part a judge wants.
- Practise the questions too. After the talk, the judge asks their own. On the judge practice page, Peabody is the judge and asks the nine questions judges ask most, each answered with one of three boxes. The judging questions post gives a strong and a weak answer for each.

• Learn the lines, not the words. If a child forgets the exact sentence, the five headings get them back on track.

Try tonight

Keep a project from Pick my project, put your child's tries in the Graph Maker, then open the judge page and tap My 60-second talk. Pick the surprise line, press play, and let them say it after Peabody twice. Print the card and tape it to the back of the board.

Questions grown-ups ask

Should my child memorise the script?

Memorise the five headings. Reading a script word for word sounds stiff, and judges like hearing the child's own words. The card is there if they freeze.

What if the judge interrupts?

Good: that means they're interested. Answer the question, then carry on from the next line.

My child is very shy. Is a minute too long?

Start with lines 1 and 3: the question and the numbers. Those two alone answer what most judges ask first, and the rest can come with practice.

Peabody (peabody.kids) is free through the end of 2026, with no ads and no sign-up. The library has free stories by reading level for the night before the fair.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/science-fair-presentation-script