NASA TECHRISE STUDENT CHALLENGE 2026 JUDGE GUIDELINES

WELCOME & OVERVIEW

Thank you for volunteering to judge the NASA TechRise Student Challenge! As a judge, we are granting you access to a subset of entries to score, but please remember that these are 6th-12th grade student teams. It is your responsibility to keep each entry (and your opinions about each entry) confidential. You may share with others that you are a judge for this contest, but you are NOT allowed to share specific team entries in any public/private forum, online or in person. And you should NEVER attempt to contact an individual student, team, or school entrant, whether now or in the future. (This does not apply to contact with entrants that you already know such as family members or your students, if a teacher).

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Please review every section before agreeing to the judge oath.

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GET TO KNOW THE NASA TECHRISE STUDENT CHALLENGE

Guided by an educator, sixth to 12th grade student teams affiliated with U.S. public, private, and charter schools submitted ideas for experiments to test on a commercial high-altitude balloon. Please visit the NASA TechRise Website and watch the Challenge Explainer video to learn more about the challenge: https://youtu.be/nDTuYVHUvrg. Judges will review the submitted experiment ideas from which 60 winning entries will be selected. Each winning team will receive $1,500 to build their experiment, a 4 x 4 x 8 inch flight box in which to build it, and an assigned spot to test it on a NASA-sponsored high-altitude balloon flight. Winners will also receive technical support from Future Engineers advisors.

USING THE JUDGE DASHBOARD

Your scoresheet is in your judge dasboard. Each scoresheet includes links to review each entry, a row to input your scores, and an OPTIONAL feedback window to provide feedback. For detailed step-by-step instructions on how to use the judge dashboard, visit our Judge Help Article.

REVIEW & SORT

- You may use the sort options as needed to organize your entry review.

SCORE & SAVE

- Please score your assigned entries and “SAVE DRAFT” periodically. Need to step away? No problem. You can log out and come back to your scores anytime.

OPTIONAL WRITTEN FEEDBACK FOR TEAMS

- We collect optional written feedback. You can use the “Writing Assistant” to help you curate positive feedback that highlights strengths or suggestions.

USING THE JUDGE DASHBOARD

FINAL REVIEW & SUBMIT

- Sort your scores by "total sum; high to low" as a final review to make sure that your scores were consistent from beginning to end and to make any adjustments necessary. If all looks good, SUBMIT! Once submitted, all scores are final and cannot be edited.

GET ANOTHER SCORESHEET (OPTIONAL)

- Want to judge again? After you have submitted your scoresheet, if you would like you can return to your dashboard and select "GET NEW SCORESHEET" to judge another group of entries.

PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION (PII)

We do not knowingly share student personally identifiable information with judges. However, if during review you find a FIRST AND LAST name in an entry or you feel like there is sufficient enough detail in an entry that could identify a student then please STOP and email support@futureengineers.org. We will review the entry and advise you on how to proceed. The only first AND last names that are allowed in an entry are significant figures. If you can find the person on Wikipedia, or if they are cited in a publication, they are significant.

SCORING RUBRIC & GUIDELINES

Your scoresheet will be populated with a set of proposals to be reviewed. Please use the scoring rubric on the following page to guide your scoring process and be sure to refer to the high-altitude balloon design guidelines based on the entry type.

All proposals should be judged. Each proposal has been vetted by contest administrators to ensure that they comply with the equivalent maximum length if they were typed with the minimum font/spacing requirement. Additionally, you may notice black boxes denoting redactions. Personally identifiable information has been redacted from all proposals. Links to additional proposal content (google docs, etc.) may also be redacted since this additional content exceeds the length requirements. Redactions should NOT impact your scoring. If you have questions regarding a proposal's eligibility, email support@futureengineers.org.

Please keep in mind that teams of sixth-12th grade students drafted the proposal you are reviewing. It is important to note that all selected winners will receive technical support from an engineering mentor to help them refine their experiment plan and complete their payload build. Winning is just the beginning of each team's educational journey. For that reason, we encourage you to embrace an experiment idea that might not be perfect in every way but could be adapted to be successful with the support of an expert/mentor.

SCORING RUBRIC & GUIDELINES

Criteria	General Guiding Question	Max Points
Impact	To what extent does the submission demonstrate a positive impact on the team's education and community, providing an opportunity for the team to gain new STEM-related skills? 1-8 No Impact 9-16 Very Little Impact 17-25 Some Impact 26-32 Clear Impact 33-40 Significant Impact	**40**
Connection	How connected is the submission to NASA's mission to explore the unknown in air and space, innovate for the benefit of humanity, and inspire the world through discovery? 1-4 No connection 5-8 Very little connection 9-12 Some connection 13-16 Clear connection 17-20 Significant connection	**20**
Alignment	How well does the proposed design of the experiment support the team's hypothesis? 1-4 No alignment 5-8 Very little alignment 9-12 Some alignment 13-16 Clear alignment 17-20 Significant alignment	**20**
Design	How well does the submission meet the design guidelines? 1-4 Does not meet guidelines 5-8 Minimally meets guidelines 9-12 Satisfactorily meets guidelines 13-16 Meets most guidelines 17-20 Meets all guidelines NOTE: Students were asked to submit an experiment idea in accordance with the Design Guidelines. We do not expect every team to fully comply with the guidelines in the proposal phase, but the experiments should have potential to be adapted for success.	**20**

JUDGE TERMS AND CONDITIONS

If you are a judge for any science, technology, engineering, art, or mathematics challenge (each a "Challenge"), you represent and warrant that:

- you understand and acknowledge that the purpose of the Challenge is to encourage participation and advancement in the fields of science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics and to promote STEM education and engagement among the general public;
- all information provided by you to Future Engineers regarding your experience and areas of expertise is true and accurate;
- you are not an employee of Future Engineers, and you are agreeing to judge and will provide your expertise and time in that capacity on a purely voluntary basis without expectation of monetary or other compensation from Future Engineers;
- you are volunteering your expertise and time solely for your own benefit, on your own time, with no promise or expectation of compensation, and for the personal purpose or pleasure derived from advancing and encouraging STEM education;
- you have not been convicted of, or pled guilty to, any crime (other than a non-DUI traffic offense);
- you are a US resident; and
- you are not a K-12 student and are 18 years of age or older.

The Platform will permit judges to review Challenge Entrants' submissions, but Future Engineers will not intentionally provide judges with access to information that could be used to identify a student. If you: (a) believe that you have been directly provided with personal details about a student; or (b) review a Challenge submission that contains identifying personal information (PI) about a student, you agree that you will immediately notify Future Engineers at support@futureengineers.org and not engage further with the Challenge submission. Examples of student personal information are:

- first and last name
- school-issued identification number
- email address, phone number, username, or other contact information
- any other personal identifier or combination of information that could be used to identify or contact a student

If you are a judge for a Challenge, you agree to:

- recuse yourself from judging a particular Challenge, and to immediately notify us of your recusal and the reasons therefor by e-mailing us at support@futureengineers.org if you: are able to discern that you know a student whose Challenge submission you have been assigned to judge; are or become aware of any reason that would compromise your ability to judge a Challenge fairly and without undue influence; do not have sufficient expertise in the subject matter of the Challenge or if you are not comfortable judging with respect to such Challenge for any reason;

JUDGE TERMS AND CONDITIONS CONTINUED

If you are a judge for a Challenge, you agree to:

- comply with all provisions of the Official Rules and Challenge Rules (defined below) that apply to judges, if any;
- judge and score each Challenge submission assigned to you in an honest, fair and impartial manner and, upon our request, provide reasoned support for your scores to us;
- strictly comply with the judging criteria for the applicable Challenge(s) that we provide and promptly contact us at support@futureengineers.org with any questions regarding such criteria; and
- keep the following information strictly confidential: the content of any Challenge submissions provided to you for evaluation; the fact that you have judged specific entries for Challenge(s); your scoring of Challenge submissions and reasons for such scoring; and, all other non-public information relating to a Challenge that is provided to you. For clarity, such information may not be disclosed or discussed by you to or with anyone other than us (including other Challenge judges). You may not enter any part of a submission into an AI platform that may train on such content (e.g., ChatGBT, Co-Pilot). Additionally, you agree not to attempt to contact any Challenge entrant, including any winner of a Challenge, unless you have a preexisting relationship with a Challenge entrant. If you have a preexisting relationship with a Challenge entrant (e.g., you are the Challenge entrant's teacher or parent) you may disclose that you are serving as a judge, but may not discuss the specifics of your role as a judge with the entrant, such as the scores you awarded or your opinion of the submissions. All submissions by Challenge Entrants may not be publicly disclosed or released by you, but may be made available in a public gallery by Future Engineers;

Please note the judge feedback fields use automated text analysis and an optional AI generative text tool, which does not train on such content.

THANK YOU FOR JUDGING!!