"Energy: Beyond the Outlet"

Art Contest Entry Guidelines

The SC Energy Office has expanded its statewide K-12 energy education art contest to include more forms of visual media!

Energy is more than the flip of a light switch! This art contest gives students the opportunity to visually communicate concepts related to electrical energy in South Carolina. Energy literacy is important because it empowers students to make informed decisions about their energy use – including the role of renewable energy and clean transportation.

Eligibility

Students in grades K-12 who are enrolled in a public, private, tribal, or homeschool in South Carolina are eligible.

Contest Topic

The theme is "Energy: Beyond the Outlet." Artwork must focus on the theme and include depictions that represent energy efficiency, renewable energy, or clean transportation. Forms of accepted media include photography, painting, drawing, digital art, and printmaking.

Artwork Requirements

- Artwork must be original and created entirely by the student, without the use of AI-generated or AI-assisted tools. Entries suspected of AI use may be disqualified.
- The artwork must not include the student's name.
- A title must be included on the Contest Entry Form.
- Entries must be submitted using a high-resolution image file (.jpg, .jpeg, .png).
- Art pieces can be created with pencil, crayon, markers, paint (watercolor, tempera, acrylic), collage, photographs, or computer graphics.
- Lettering and messages should be large enough to reproduce well, with all pencil markings erased.
- Copyrighted characters, product logos, trademarks, and brand names are not permitted in any form. This includes drawn or painted reproductions, as well as cut-out images from magazines, packaging, or other printed materials used in collage (for example: magazine or printed images containing copyrighted content, brand names, or logos).

Judging Criteria

- Scientific Accuracy
- Visual Impact
- Theme Interpretation
- Originality
- Aesthetics

Entry Submission

- Email entry to EnergyCS@ors.sc.gov by **February 12, 2027**.
- Only one entry may be submitted per student.
- The Contest Entry Form must be completed, legible, and submitted with the artwork.
- Students must include 1–2 "work-in-progress" photos with the entry to provide evidence of original work.

The contest entry form, along with the artwork and supporting documents, must be received no later than 5:00 pm ET on February 12, 2027. Electronic submission via email to EnergyCS@ors.sc.gov is required.

Prizes

Winners for each category will receive a prize designed to encourage continued exploration of energy concepts based on age/grade level. Example prizes include:

- K – 2nd: Solar Powered RainbowMaker®
- 3rd – 5th: DIY Mini Drone Kit
- 6th – 8th: MudWatt: Grow a Living Fuel Cell
- 9th – 12th: Solar USB Kit

Disclaimer

The contestant must grant the South Carolina Energy Office (SCEO) a non-exclusive, royalty-free license to reproduce, use, display, and distribute the artwork in SCEO publications, websites, videos, news media, and other promotional materials, without further compensation or consent, and without regard to any copyright, trademark, or other proprietary right the contestant may hold in the work. When the artwork is used, SCEO may identify the student by first name, last initial, age, grade, and/or school; SCEO will not publish the student's full name or other personal contact information.

The contestant must understand that this artwork may be disclosed to the news media and/or the public in an effort to increase energy literacy in South Carolina. Once SCEO has published or distributed this artwork, SCEO has no control over and cannot be held responsible for its re-release or reuse by outside media outlets.

As a South Carolina state agency, the SCEO is subject to the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and the personal information provided on the entry form may be subject to public release as required by law.

About the South Carolina Energy Office

The South Carolina Energy Office (SCEO), housed within the Office of Regulatory Staff, is the principal planning entity for energy matters in South Carolina. Its mission is to promote energy efficiency, renewable energy, and clean transportation through a variety of methods, including technical assistance, education and outreach, funding opportunities, and data resources. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Department of Energy or the United States Government.

Teacher Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help teachers integrate the contest into their curriculum while providing you with a standardized way to evaluate the hundreds (or thousands!) of entries you'll receive.

Classroom Discussion Starters

Help students brainstorm by asking questions that bridge the gap between a wall plug and the source:

- The Journey: "When you flip a switch, where does that 'spark' actually come from? Is it powered by natural gas, nuclear, or a solar farm in the SC Lowcountry?"
- Local Power: "What natural resources do the Carolinas have? (Sun, wind, water, nuclear)."
- Sustainability: "What happens to the environment when we choose 'clean' energy sources?"

Quick Lesson Integration

- Science (STEM): Discuss the Law of Conservation of Energy and the concept that energy is transformed.
- Art: Focus on Visual Hierarchy. What is the first thing a person should see? The message or the drawing?
- Social Studies: Research how clean energy creates jobs in South Carolina.