Young ICT Explorers

2026 Competition

Information Pack

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ABOUT YOUNG ICT EXPLORERS

Young ICT Explorers is an Australian educational program and competition for students in Years 3–12. Participants create projects using Digital Technology/Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to solve real-world problems or explore personal interests.

Technology evolves rapidly and enables innovation across all industries. For example, educational computer games, informative websites, AI, robotics and cybersecurity illustrate its transformative impact.

This competition inspires students to consider careers in digital technologies/ICT and understand the vast possibilities technology offers.

At its core, Young ICT Explorers values creativity, originality, and problem-solving, empowering students to imagine and build digital solutions for a better future.

ELIGIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION

As a student

You are eligible if you are in Years 3–12 in 2026 and reside in Australia. Ask a teacher, parent, or guardian to register you or your team by **1 July 2026**.

- Teams can have up to **four students from the same year category** (see 'Categories' below).
- Individual participation is allowed but working with a team is recommended for collaborative and creative development.
- Submit your project documentation by **31 July 2026**.

Visit the [Young ICT Explorers website](#) for project ideas and insights from past winners.

As a Teacher/Parent/Guardian

Teachers, parents, or guardians can register teams of up to **four students per project**. Teams must be in the same year category. Multiple teams from the same school are welcome.

- Registration closes **1 July 2026**.
- Project documentation must be submitted by **31 July 2026**.
- For questions, contact us at yicte@anagramevents.com.au.

AWARD CATEGORIES

Core Awards

Students must compete individually or in teams **(up to four members)** in one of these categories:

- School Years 3 - 4
- School Years 5 - 6
- School Years 7 - 8
- School Years 9 -10
- School Years 11 -12

Optional Award Categories

Students must first enter a **Core Award category** before they are eligible to enter any optional categories.

Sustainability Award

This award recognizes a project that demonstrates a strong commitment to environmental sustainability. Entries may come from any year level and any project category, provided they show meaningful consideration of how digital solutions can support a healthier, more sustainable planet.

For examples of suitable projects, see the Sustainability Award page on the YICTE website.

Best Use of AI Award

This award recognises student projects that thoughtfully and creatively apply Artificial Intelligence to solve problems, enhance user experiences, or explore new possibilities. Projects may be entered into this category if they include **any** of the following AI elements:

- **Machine Learning** – systems that learn from data or improve over time
- **Computer Vision** – recognising, detecting, or interpreting images or video
- **Natural Language Processing** – understanding or generating human language
- **AI-powered Tools** – using existing AI services or APIs to enable new functionality
- **Generative AI** – creating new content such as text, images, audio, code, or designs

Projects can be entered into one of the following divisions:

- *Junior (School Years 3–6)*
- *Middle (School Years 7–9)*
- *Senior (School Years 10–12)*

Projects are judged on both the Core Award criteria and AI-specific criteria such as appropriate use, understanding, ethics, and impact

Cybersecurity and Privacy Award

This award recognises projects that demonstrate exceptional commitment to protecting users, safeguarding data, and embedding responsible cybersecurity and privacy practices throughout the design and implementation of the solution.

- *Junior (School Years 3–6)*
- *Middle (School Years 7–9)*
- *Senior (School Years 10–12)*

Projects may explore secure coding, threat detection, encryption, authentication, online safety education, or privacy-aware design.

LOCATIONS

Young ICT Explorers is delivered entirely online and is open to students from all states and territories across Australia. Qualified judges from industry and academia assess projects via a Zoom presentation or by reviewing a pre-recorded video demonstrating the entry. Prizes are awarded within the following regions:

- New South Wales
- Queensland
- Victoria
- Western Australia
- Australian Capital Territory
- South Australia
- Tasmania
- Northern Territory

First place holders in each region will be eligible to progress onto the National Finals.

PROJECT TOPICS

To foster creativity and align with students' interests, the scope of projects is kept deliberately broad. Students may draw inspiration from many STEM-related themes, but **all entries must include a clear ICT/Digital Technologies component**. This means the project must involve digital systems, software, hardware, programming, data, or another aspect of Digital Technologies — **not just Science or Design Technologies on their own**. Projects may be inspired by, but not limited to topic areas such as:

- Environment and Sustainability
- Engineering and Innovation
- Business and Entrepreneurship
- Design and Creativity
- Entertainment and Media
- Health and Wellbeing
- Community and Social Impact
- Cybersecurity and Privacy
- Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

For inspiration, visit the Young ICT Explorers website to view previous projects.

WHAT COUNTS AS DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES?

All Young ICT Explorers projects must include a **clear ICT/Digital Technologies component**. This means the project must meaningfully involve one or more of the following:

- **Programming or coding**

- **Digital systems or hardware** (e.g., microcontrollers, sensors, robotics)

- **Software development** (apps, games, websites, tools)

- **Data collection, analysis, or visualisation**

- **Networking, cybersecurity, or digital communication systems**

- **Electronics or embedded systems**

- **AI, automation, or machine learning concepts**

Projects **cannot** rely solely on science experiments, design technologies, or physical prototypes **without** a digital element. These areas can absolutely inspire the project — but the digital component must be central, not optional.

Examples of Eligible Projects

These examples illustrate the wide range of possibilities, as long as the project includes a clear ICT/Digital Technologies component.

Environment and Sustainability

- A sensor-based system that monitors soil moisture and sends alerts to a mobile app
- A data dashboard showing local air-quality trends using publicly available dataset

Engineering and Innovation

- A custom-built robot that performs simple tasks using programmed instructions
- A microcontroller-powered device that automates a household process

Business and Entrepreneurship

- A budgeting or savings app designed for young people
- A digital tool that helps small businesses manage bookings or inventory

Design and Creativity

- An interactive website showcasing original artwork or stories
- A game prototype built using a visual or text-based programming language

Entertainment and Media

- A music-mixing tool that uses code to manipulate sound
- A video-streaming concept with a custom user interface

Health and Wellbeing

- A wearable device that tracks steps or heart rate and visualises the data
- A mindfulness app with guided activities and user-generated progress tracking

Community and Social Impact

- A digital platform that connects volunteers with local community needs
- A safety-alert system designed for schools or neighbourhoods

Cybersecurity and Privacy

- A password-strength checker built with simple encryption logic
- An educational game that teaches younger students about online safety

Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

- A simple image-recognition model trained to identify recyclable materials
- A chatbot that answers questions about a chosen topic

Common Mistakes to Avoid

These are the issues that most often lead to confusion or ineligible entries.

❌ **Projects with no digital component**

Science experiments, design prototypes, or physical models without any software, hardware, programming, or data element are not eligible.

❌ **Projects that use technology *without* demonstrating Digital Technologies skills**

Passion projects are welcome — including animations, Claymation, films, and 3D-printed creations — **as long as students create the digital elements themselves**. Examples of projects that *don't* meet the Digital Technologies requirement on their own include:

- Creating a slideshow or presentation **as the entire project**
- Using a 3D printer to produce an object **that wasn't designed by the student**

These activities are valuable and creative, but they must be paired with **original digital work** such as coding, hardware integration, data processing, or custom digital design to be eligible.

❌ **Projects that rely entirely on purchased kits**

If a kit is used, students must show original coding, customisation, or digital problem-solving beyond the standard instructions.

❌ **Projects that are purely theoretical**

Entries should include a working prototype, demonstration, or functional concept — not just research report.

❌ **Projects where the digital component is an afterthought**

The ICT/Digital Technologies element must be central, not a small add-on.

PRIZES

All prize amounts are awarded per student, not per project. A maximum of four prizes can be issued per team. If a team has more than four members, schools will need to cover the cost of any additional prizes.

Core Awards - State Competitions

Prizes awarded for each category in each location:

- **First Place**: $150 e-Voucher
- **Second Place**: $100 e-Voucher
- **Third Place**: $50 e-Voucher

National Finals

- **First Place**: $200 e-Voucher
- **Second Place**: $150 e-Voucher
- **Third Place**: $100 e-Voucher

Sustainability Award

- $150 e-Voucher

Best Use of AI Awards

- *Junior (School Years 3–6)* $100 e-Voucher

- *Middle (School Years 7–9)* $100 e-Voucher

- *Senior (School Years 10–12)* $100 e-Voucher

Cybersecurity and Privacy

- *Junior (School Years 3–6)* $100 e-Voucher

- *Middle (School Years 7–9)* $100 e-Voucher

- *Senior (School Years 10–12)* $100 e-Voucher

Please note: Prize amounts are subject to change depending on available funding.

REGISTRATION PROCESS

1. **Initial Registration**

   o Teachers/guardians register their school or independent teams using the online portal by **1 July 2026**.

2. **Project Submission**

   o Upload project documentation (PDF, Word document, or ZIP file) by **31 July 2026**.

   o Required documentation includes:

     ▪ A project report (template available online).

     ▪ Media Release and Permission Forms for each student.

Refer to the website's download section for guidance on preparing submissions.

CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

- Participation is free.

- Students must be of school age in Australia.

- Teams with mixed categories are entered in the category of the eldest student.

- Projects must demonstrate a clear link to ICT/Digital Technologies.

- Submissions with uploads exceeding 20MB or more than five pages may be rejected.

- Work must be original and properly referenced to avoid disqualification.

- Each project must be entered as a separate entry into the online registration system.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- **Deadline**: All entries must be uploaded to the competition website by midnight on the submission closing date.

- **Acceptable File Types**:

  o Documents: DOC, DOCX, PDF

  o Media files: MP3, MPG, AVI, JPG, MOV, SWF, FLV, MP4

- Web content: HTML

- Use a ZIP file to upload more than one file. The ZIP file must not exceed **20 MB** per file.

- Video submissions may alternatively be uploaded via reputable streaming services.

- **Unacceptable File Types**:

  - Due to potential security risks, files such as EXE, BAT, COM, and MSI are not allowed.

- **Special File Types**:

  - If your submission requires a different file type, contact the Young ICT Explorers Organising Team at yicte@anagramevents.com.au for approval.

- **Age-Appropriate Content**:

  - Projects must only include material suitable for all ages.

- **Project Documentation**

  - The primary document outlining your project must be submitted in one of the following formats:

    - Portable Document File (**PDF**)

    - Microsoft Word (**DOC/DOCX**)

SUGGESTED REPORT STRUCTURE

1. Title Page

- Your name or the names of your group members.

- Name of your project.

- School name.

- Event location.

2. Abstract

- What is your project?

- How did you choose your project?

- What challenges or problems did you encounter?

3. Introduction

- What inspired the idea for your project?

4. Video Submission/Photos

- Include the link to your video or any pictures of your project.

5. Problem Statement

- What problem are you trying to solve with your project?

6. Design and Features

- Describe the design and key features of your project.

- Outline the challenges faced during the design and building process.

- Reflect on what you would do differently next time.

7. Conclusion

- Does your project achieve what you set out to accomplish?

8. Technologies Used

- List the programs and technologies you used to create your project.

9. Optional Report Template

To assist students in formatting their documentation a report template is available here or in the information section on the website. Students can adapt the report template to suit their project.

JUDGING CRITERIA

Core Award Categories

Each entry will be judged by the following marking criteria:

- **Creativity and Innovation**

  - Does the project demonstrate original thinking?
  - What is the point of difference between this project and similar products on the market?
  - What makes this project better or more effective than comparable solutions?

- **Level of Difficulty**

  - How challenging was the project for the students' year level?
  - How were problems identified, solved, or overcome during development?

- **Quality and Completeness**

  - How well does the project meet its objectives?
  - Does it function as a working product that demonstrates practical skills and an understanding of Digital Technologies/ICT?
  - Is it a fully developed solution or a prototype? (Both are welcome.)

- **Documentation and Presentation**

  - Is the project explained clearly during the Zoom session or in the video?

  - Is the project's report well-structured and thorough?

==Projects are first assessed using the Core Award criteria above, then against the criteria below for specific optional awards categories.==

Best Use of AI Award

- **Appropriate Use of AI**

  - Is AI used in a way that is purposeful and relevant to the project's goal?
  - Does the AI component meaningfully contribute to the solution rather than being added for novelty?
  - Have students selected an AI tool, model, or method that suits the problem they are addressing?

- **Understanding of AI Concepts (Age-Appropriate)**

  - Can students explain, at their year level, how the AI component works?
  - Do they show understanding of ideas such as training data, patterns, models, or decision-making?
  - Are they aware of limitations, accuracy issues, or how the AI might behave unpredictably?

- For older students: can they discuss evaluation, testing, or improvement of their AI component?

- **Ethical and Responsible Use**
    - Have students considered issues such as bias, fairness, privacy, or safety?
    - Is there evidence that students thought about the impact of their AI system on users or the community?
    - Does the project demonstrate responsible and thoughtful use of AI tools?

- **Impact or Purpose**
    - Does the AI component help solve a meaningful problem or create a valuable experience?
    - Is the intended impact clear and well-explained?
    - Does the project show potential real-world benefit or thoughtful application?

Cybersecurity and Privacy Award

- **Technical Merit**
    - Correct application of cybersecurity and privacy principles
    - Accuracy of concepts
    - Quality of cyber-specific implementation
    - Use of appropriate tools or methodologies
    - Evidence of testing, validation, or threat modelling

- **Problem Understanding & Relevance**
    - Clear explanation of the cybersecurity or privacy challenge
    - Relevance to real-world risks or user needs
    - Insight into vulnerabilities, threats, or human factors

- **Ethical Considerations**
    - Ensuring the project protects people and avoids harm
    - Understanding of ethical hacking principles
    - Avoidance of harmful or illegal activities
    - Consideration of privacy, consent, and data protection
    - Human-centred design that prioritises user safety
      (Students must not test on real systems or data without explicit permission.)

2026 KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

- **Registrations Close:** 1 July.
- **Project Documentation Due:** 31 July
- **State Reviews Dates:** 3 August – 20 October
- **State Awards Ceremony:** 29 October
- **National Finals Review Dates:** 9 – 21 November
- **National Finals Awards Ceremony:** 26 November

All dates are subject to change.

JUDGING REVIEWS

Zoom Reviews

Reviews dates: 3 August – 20 October

- Senior Years 7-12: 9 August – 30 September
- Junior Years 3 – 6: 1 September – 24 October

We recommend that each team rehearse their presentation with a teacher or parent before presenting to the judges. Teachers and parents can act as judges, asking relevant questions to help students understand what to expect.

- **10–15 minutes per team**
  - o **5 minutes:** Team presents their project to the judges.
  - o **5 minutes:** Judges ask questions about the project.
  - o **5 minutes:** Judges take notes and write up feedback.

We will email each registered school/organisation to book in time for Zoom reviews.

Pre-recorded Video Presentations

For teams submitting a pre-recorded presentation, it's important to anticipate potential questions from the judges and address some of them within the recording.

Judges may ask the following questions:

- What Technologies did you use?
- What problems occurred during development and how did you resolve them?
- Did you create the project in class time and how long did it take you to create?
- What was the inspiration for your idea?
- What are the future plans for this project?

Maximum duration of Recording: 8 minutes.

- **Due Date**
  - o All pre-recorded submissions are due **30 September.**

If recordings are not uploaded to the portal by this date, unless other arrangements have been made, they may not be accepted. *Submission dates are subject to change.*

Recordings are to be uploaded to the following location:

https://www.dropbox.com/request/z08kqhlAzF72422Wd7AL

File naming convention for recorded entries.

All recorded entry files **must** follow the naming convention below.

Uploads that do not use this format may not be accepted, and you will be asked to upload the file again using the correct naming convention.

Format:

Submission Project ID_Category_ School_Project Title_State/Region_Teacher or Parent Name

Example:

345_3-4_ Good News Lutheran School_Saving Endangered Species_SE QLD_Ven Turner

STATE AWARDS CEREMONY

The State Awards Ceremony will be held via Zoom on **29 October 2026**, recognising all placeholders and winners.

NATIONAL FINALS AND NATIONAL FINALS AWARDS CEREMONY

National judging sessions occur **9 – 21 November 2026**, with the National Awards Ceremony on **26 November 2026.**

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact Steven – 0404 695 444 or yicte@anagramevents.com.au