



**CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR
2006 PROJECT SUMMARY**

Name(s) Nik Alan Crain	Project Number J1012
Project Title Is Our Sense of Smell Sensible?	
<p style="text-align: center;">Abstract</p> <p>Objectives/Goals Our perceptions of our world are based on information received from our five senses. I often wonder about the accuracy of our sensory ability. Considering the vast amount of input our minds receive, it seems reasonable that our senses can be fooled. I believe our sense of smell would be the least reliable and prove to be influenced by our expectations. More importantly, I plan to discover if our sense of smell is really sensible.</p> <p>Methods/Materials To obtain accurate results, I tested a group of 100 people and used the following three scents: wintergreen lifesavers, cinnamon sticks, and granola. I constructed nine boxes, applying a negative, neutral, and positive label on each box. Students were told to read each label, smell each scent, and rate it on a scale from one to five. Without students knowing the reason for secrecy of the scents, the ratings are in fact more truthful and precise.</p> <p>Results Based on my research, I found that expectations exert a strong influence on our sense of smell. Positive and negative labels assigned to the same scent clearly affected the preference of the scent. My hypothesis proved to be accurate, and the positive labels received nearly double the scores than those of the negative labels.</p> <p>Conclusions/Discussion By conducting this experiment, I was able to conclude that our sense of smell is not reliable and gives credence to the belief that a rose would not smell as sweet if it were given another name.</p>	
Summary Statement The purpose of my experiment was to discover if expectations influenced the perception of smell.	
Help Received College Student helped gather materials for project	