

# Reference Review

## Online & Print

### Online

## A Whole New World—of Science

An in-depth exploration to entice the next generation of scientists

By Audrey Sumser

Billed as “Science for the Next Generation,” Scholastic’s ScienceFlix is a highly engaging digital resource that offers students an in-depth examination of more than 30 subject areas. Eye-catching and user-friendly, this database provides curriculum-driven content that supports Next Generation Science Standards through a variety of multimedia platforms that encourage student participation, experimentation, and critical thinking.

### ScienceFlix

<http://scienceflix.scholastic.com>

Grade Level 4 & Up

Cost \$695

**Ease of Use and Visual Appeal** ScienceFlix’s accessible interface allows students to find material with ease. Consistency is central to its effectiveness: straightforward language clearly indicates what information can be found when opening embedded links, and page layouts look similar no matter the subject. The result is a cohesive, clean, and visually appealing resource. While the homepage may seem overwhelming, it successfully captures users’ attention and draws them in.

Elsewhere, the visual design elements are streamlined and less busy, relying on larger, bolder fonts to indicate areas of importance, while small blocks of text bordered in blue direct users to additional resources that extend the content. The spatial relationship among items on the page encourages students to focus on one element at a time, aiding in readability. Most of the text

appears in a simple black font, but additional colors are also used to direct users to other reference points. Vertical blue banners adorn the sides of each page, while pale blue and white backgrounds allow the visual content to pop. Red, used sparingly, adds a splash of vibrant color to the otherwise cool palette, which is effective without being overbearing.

**Content** By default, the homepage opens to “Browse All Topics” and creates a portal to the 30-plus subjects arranged in six broad categories: “Earth Science,” “Space Science,” “Life Science,” “Health & Human

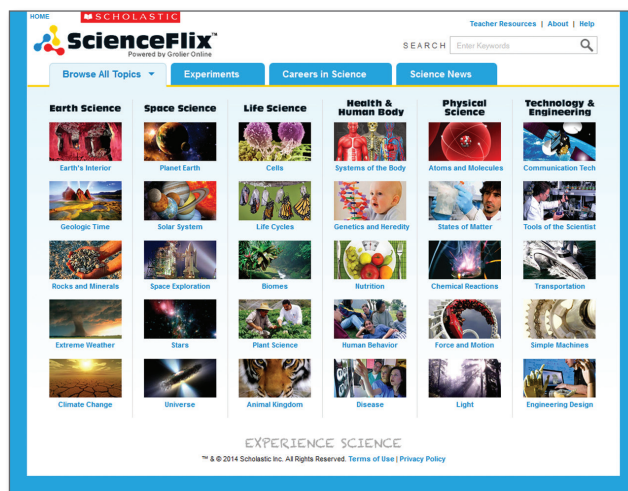
Body,” “Physical Science,” and “Technology & Engineering.” Each is then divided into five more specific content areas—for instance, “Physical Science” includes “Atoms & Molecules,” “States of Matter,” “Chemical Reactions,” “Force & Motion,” and “Light”—which are represented by a colorful thumbnail. Upon accessing a selected subject, students will discover a short video about the topic, followed by a brief, authoritative article written by ScienceFlix contributors. The text concludes with the correct way to cite the material in MLA, APA, and Chicago Manual of Style formats.

Each article also includes a table of contents as well as other helpful tools, including the options to hear the text read aloud, look up words, email, print, and display in Spanish. Students can even adjust an article’s Lexile measure to accommodate their needs. On the left side of the page, other relevant information can be found, such as “Dive Deeper,” “Explore More,” “Related Websites,” “Science Lab,” “What Do You Think?,” “Show What You Know,” and “Careers.” This sidebar, along with the vibrant photographs and videos, complements the text and furthers students’ understanding of the subject.

Users may also access the three other primary sections of the database (“Experiments,” “Careers in Science,” and “Science News”) from either the homepage or other, more specific pages. As the title suggests, “Experiments” explains the vital role that trial and error plays in the scientific method and, through 15 examples, takes students through the process from problem to conclusion. Laboratory safety, lab techniques, and lab report guidelines as well as recommended websites offer students practical advice.

“Careers in Science” contains written and visual reference material that explores the various scientific professions, from acoustics to zoology, as well as websites that focus on general career information. Users can browse sites by career.

Of the four main sections, “Science News” has the most



to gain from the inclusion of additional content. Currently, only three articles are available, and the "News Story Archive" includes an additional six pieces. The lack of material can be attributed to ScienceFlix's summer 2014 launch and will surely increase as the resource develops. Finally, a keyword search function is available throughout the database, while the Help function clearly explains the various tools at the users' disposal.

**Student and Teacher Resources** Accessible from every page is the Teacher Resources link. Detailed lesson plans and quizzes are available to educators for each of the 30 units, while numerous projects, videos, and other media are provided to assist educators in engaging their students.

**Verdict** As classrooms continue to emphasize STEM education, students and teachers need reliable and relevant resources to increase science literacy. This dynamic and engaging resource will empower the next generation of innovators and foster a continued interest in science.

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