

Planning and Conducting 4-H Club Meetings

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Dear Leader:

By now, you may have questions about planning and conducting your 4-H club meetings. This letter includes information about the basic, everyday ingredients of a successful 4-H meeting.

Club officers and committees

Club officers are an important part of the leadership team. Being an officer gives the member an opportunity to develop and practice leadership skills and responsibility. The following 4-H officers are usually elected in each club:

President
Vice-President
Secretary
Treasurer
Reporter
Recreation Leader

Other officers the club may want to elect include photographer, historian and coordinators for special events such as field trips.

Special instruction sheets and materials for each of the primary offices can be ordered through your local University of Missouri Extension center.

Because one of the goals of 4-H is to develop leadership skills, all members should have an opportunity to be an officer or committee chair. In some large clubs, members fill an office or committee chair for half of the year. Other clubs have junior and senior officers. Both approaches give



In this letter you'll find:

- Club officers and committees
- Teaching the 4-H pledge and motto
- Setting goals with your 4-H club
- Planning a 4-H club calendar and program plan
- Possible agenda items for a 4-H club meeting
- Involving parents with your club
- Tours, activity days, field trips, etc.

more members an opportunity for formal leadership.

Committees can help the 4-H club function smoothly and provide opportunities for more people to be involved. Committee membership need not be limited to club members. Club leaders and parents are encouraged to become involved in helping 4-H'ers with planning and supervising various club activities; but members should be involved in

making decisions and carrying them out.

Teaching the 4-H pledge and motto

Members and adults can better understand 4-H if the leader presents the 4-H pledge and motto to the group early in the club year. The pledge and motto should be used regularly in meetings, ceremonies, etc.

The 4-H pledge (with corresponding motions) is:

I pledge:

My Head to clearer thinking,
(with right hand, point to head)

My Heart to greater loyalty, (place right hand over heart)

My Hands to larger service, (arms bent, palms up)

My Health to better living, (arms at sides)

For my club,

My community,

My country,

And my world.

The 4-H motto, is **“To make the best better.”** The leader may find it helpful to make a poster or have the 4-H'ers make a poster of the 4-H pledge and motto to use at each meeting so members can read and memorize them. After the first meeting, each member can take a turn leading the Pledge of Allegiance and the 4-H pledge to open the meetings. Many clubs close meetings with the 4-H motto recited in unison. Flag sets and other club meeting aids are also available from

the *National 4-H Supply Catalog*. Your local MU Extension center has copies of this catalog.

Setting goals with your 4-H club

It's helpful for you and your 4-H members to set a few basic goals for your club each year. These goals are statements of what the members would like to accomplish as a club. Goals should help the club meet the needs and interests of individual members. Examples of goals a club could set are

- to provide a service to the community,
- to introduce others to 4-H,
- to learn more about nutrition (or some other subject), or
- to involve family members in 4-H activities.

As a leader, you will want to set goals for yourself and encourage your 4-H members to set individual goals. These can be goals to achieve in leadership roles, in their project or in their personal development.

Planning a 4-H club calendar and program plan

After the club's goals have been established, use these goals to design a yearlong program plan and club calendar. The calendar will tell you what the club is doing when, and who is responsible for it. A plan will help direct the club's activities towards its goals.

Be sure to involve your 4-H members and their parents in developing the club calendar and program plan. Allow all members to contribute their ideas and interests before choosing the activities for the year. When selecting an activity, refer to your club's goals to see if the activity will help attain those goals. The calendar and plan should include a variety of activities to stimulate the club members' interest and enthusiasm:

- There can be educational presentations, for which a speaker or program is brought in to the meeting.

- Members can give presentations.
- Project meetings can be scheduled to help members set goals for their projects, to provide information and ideas, to work on projects, and to prepare for contests and fairs.
- Your club can plan a club show to share what members have done during the year with fellow members and others in the community.
- Social activities can be planned throughout the year, and your club can invite family, friends and other 4-H clubs to attend.

Youth staff are a good source of ideas for club activities. You can contact your local 4-H staff to find out what the county and state calendars include, especially the dates of events, contests, fairs, etc. that are of interest to your members.

The 4-H meeting

Club meetings should be planned to include three areas:

- **Fun** — Plan 15 to 20 minutes for recreation, refreshment and fellowship.
- **Business** — Allow 15 to 20 minutes for the business meeting, discussion and planning.
- **Learning** — Include 40 to 60 minutes for community service activities, tours, guest speakers and presentations.

Possible agenda items for a 4-H club meeting

A recommended business order is:

1. Call to order,
2. Pledge of Allegiance,
3. 4-H Pledge,
4. Roll call,
5. Minutes of the last meeting,
6. Approval of minutes,
7. Treasurer's report,
8. Officer and committee reports,
9. Unfinished business,
10. New business,
11. Meeting adjourned.

Usually, the program begins after the formal business meeting is

adjourned. Recreation and refreshments can also follow the meeting. Some clubs use refreshments and recreation before the meeting as welcome activities. There are endless agenda variations, and variety certainly helps make the meeting more interesting and lively.

Some clubs prefer to alternate business meetings with project meetings, or to have short informal business sessions at some point during project meetings. You might consider trying a variety of methods to determine which works best with your members' age groups, your club's size and your project areas.

Involving parents with your club

Successful 4-H membership usually requires a great deal of parental support. There are a variety of methods for getting parents involved. The classic reason for becoming a leader is to provide an opportunity for a son or daughter to join 4-H. It is logical to encourage parents to be leaders, assist committees or contribute to the club in other ways. Don't hesitate to ask parents to help the club.

Many clubs strongly encourage parents to attend all meetings with their children. Parents may be asked to chaperone a club activity, host a meeting, teach a special skill or share a particular interest. If they are sharing information with the club, it doesn't necessarily have to be related to a project. It could be regarding citizenship, leadership, community service, careers or other topics.

Tours, activity days, field trips, etc.

Your club members will enjoy a variety of field trips, tours and special activity days.

Sometimes you teach them more in a well-planned field trip than in a regular club meeting. These special activities can involve a variety of experiences. They can be related to specific projects that club members

How can I use the information in this letter?

1. New ideas to use in our club: _____

2. Other people who could help us and how they might help: _____

3. Questions to ask MU Extension staff and other leaders: _____

are involved in. They can involve community service or be historical. Other 4-H leaders are an excellent source of ideas for field trips for your club.

Your 4-H members will enjoy planning and organizing these special events. They may even want to write to invite another club to join them for them for the trip.

If you have further questions or concerns, contact your local MU Extension staff or another volunteer leader. Youth staff can provide leader training at club meetings if requested. We want to help you succeed.

Have a good meeting!

Character is important

Missouri 4-H recognizes the importance of good character in everything that is done. 4-H staff and volunteers, as well as 4-H members and their families, know that a person of character

- is a good person, someone to look up to and admire;
- knows the difference between right and wrong and always tries to do what is right;
- sets a good example;
- makes the world a better place; and
- lives according to the **Six Pillars of Character** — Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship.

Other helpful resources

Y783, *So You Are a Club Officer*

Find this and other helpful resources online: <http://4h.missouri.edu/resources/materials/category.htm#project>.

Volunteers...the foundation of youth development:

<http://4h.missouri.edu/resources/>

Adapted from Dodd, M.A., Hoglum, L., and Robinson, M. (1998). *Letters to New 4-H Leaders*. Oregon State University Cooperative Extension Service, Corvallis, Ore.