



4-H Club Constitution and By-Laws

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A great foundation for any successful organization or club is a workable Constitution and By-Laws. Each 4-H club is encouraged to develop a constitution and bylaws. This document reflects the organizational makeup of the 4-H club. It describes when and where the club meets, what officers the club elects, etc. Too often, clubs create new rules or guidelines for themselves over the course of years, and those rules are often partially forgotten or vaguely remembered, difficult to find, and can become a serious point of anger and frustration within the club.

A 4-H Club Constitution and By-Laws need to be readily available to every family and easy to find. As things change, club's must remain responsive to the times and be responsive to changes in the needs and priorities of their membership, changes in meeting space, and changes in county and state 4-H rules and policies. The 4-H Club By-Laws should be kept current; reviewing them annually by the 4-H Club membership.

A current, recently reviewed set of club By-Laws can often prevent many problems and hard feelings before they can get started. A Constitution and set of By-Laws that some can remember having but no one can find or is only brought out when tempers are high, is almost worse than no By-Laws at all.

The **Constitution** is the base foundation and is usually not amended. Information in it should be general, yet firm enough to establish strength for the group. The **By-Laws** are designed to be easily amended and are the working document for the club.

After completing the constitution and bylaws, forward a copy to the local Extension Office **annually** after it has been reviewed and adopted by the Club membership.

What Are the Benefits of the Members and Leaders creating and reviewing their Constitution and By-Laws?

Everyone in the club should get the opportunity to participate in the creation of these documents. Member involvement in creating these documents is an excellent way to develop interest, leadership, writing skills, and decision-making skills. A constitution and by-laws that are well developed, have the principle of providing courtesy and justice to all, partiality to none, willingness of the membership to support the club, and the right for the minority to be heard at meetings.

The entire 4-H club is responsible for writing and approving the constitution and bylaws. It is important that members, parents and volunteer leaders have input in how the club operates. Adults should only serve as advisors to the team of youth who will be the creators and designers.

People support what they help to create. People don't drill holes in boats they helped build.

Tips for the Constitution and By-Law Process

The mention of creating or updating the clubs constitution and by-laws is not that exciting, therefore the process must be hands on, fun, and exciting. The educational component will come naturally as the process unfolds.

One of the first things a club may want to do is establish a committee to design and create a draft for the club to review. This does not all have to be done in the same night, give yourself and the team some time to process their thoughts and add to valuable discussion. You may also want to check with your local University of Missouri Extension center to see if there are standing rules in the county 4-H program that your club will need to take into consideration while creating or updating the constitution and by-laws.

Process ideas:

Below are a few ideas that may be helpful in providing ownership to the process.

- Post flip chart paper up around the room, each paper having a separate article on the top of the page. Have members of the team walk around the room and write up what they think belongs under each heading.
- Post flip chart paper up around the room, each paper having a separate article on the top of the page. Have members write information and ideas on a note card and then post the note card under the appropriate heading.
- Divide the team into smaller groups giving each group a listing of articles. Allow the groups to brainstorm information that should be included under each article.

Whatever method your team chooses to use, the processing of ideas is vital for team success. Once ideas are gathered and presented, discussion must take place. The group can move the ideas around and create a logical flow for their club. Again, this is a process over time, it is not designed to all happen in one meeting.

After the document is put together in draft form, it must be presented to the club for adoption or ratification. The first step in this process is to read aloud and discuss each article individually. Final ratification or adoption will not occur until the next meeting. This allows members time to think about the material and suggest any changes before voting. The final step to this process is to read the document in its entirety at the next meeting and to take a final vote of the 4-H Club membership on rather to except the document as read.

Suggested 4-H Club Constitution

Article I – Name and Purpose

Section 1 – Name

The name of this 4-H organization shall be _____
4-H club.

Section 2 – Purpose

The Purposes of this 4-H Club are as follows:

1. To develop life skills, such as self-concept, relating to others, decision-making, physical skills, and practical skills.
2. To provide an organized means for youth to learn from the knowledge of adult leaders.
3. To provide for an enjoyable atmosphere for learning.
4. To promote community interaction through volunteerism and community service.

Article II - Membership

Section 1 – Eligibility

Any boy or girl in this (area, community, county), who is eight years of age on December 31st of the 4-H year and has not reached their nineteenth birthday on December 31st of the current year, may become a member of this club regardless of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, ancestry, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation or disability. Five- to seven-year-olds on December 31st of the 4-H year may enroll as a 4-H Clover Kid.

Section 2 – Enrollment

Members must re-enroll in 4-H on an annual basis to retain active 4-H member status.

Section 3 – Responsibilities

Each member is encouraged to participate regularly in club meetings.

Each member must enroll in a minimum of one project and is encouraged to keep a project record and share what they learned through a talk, demonstration or exhibit.

Participation in 4-H is a privilege and participants are expected to show respect and cooperation to 4-H leaders and other participants. Each member is expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the Behavior Guidelines established by Missouri 4-H. Participants may be removed from 4-H programs or activities for misconduct.

Membership rules and guidelines for participation, completion and eligibility are set forth by Missouri 4-H in the annual issue of the *Clover—guide to Missouri 4-H programs, projects and publications.*

Section 4 – Member in Good Standing

Members in good standing of this club are those who have met or exceeded current Missouri 4-H and County 4-H Council rules and guidelines for eligibility and attendance, and have met or exceeded the 4-H Club's additional requirements for membership.

Article III – Meetings

Section 1 – Dates

The club shall meet regularly every _____ at (time) _____ at (place) _____. Special meetings may be called by the President and 4-H leader as needed. Adequate notice is needed.

Section 2 – Quorum

A simple majority (one half plus one) of members must be present to conduct official business of the club.

Section 3 – Order of Business

The following order of business shall be generally followed at regular club meetings:

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance and the 4-H Pledge
3. Roll Call
4. Minutes of last meeting
5. Treasurer's report
6. Report of committees
7. Unfinished business
8. New business
9. 4-H Leader's report
10. Announcements

11. Adjournment
12. Educational program/project work
13. Recreation/refreshments

Section 4 – Parliamentary Procedure

Robert's Rules of Order shall generally govern the meetings of the club. Club decision making on some issues may also be guided by a process as outlined in LG776 – "Making Group Decisions" by Missouri 4-H.

Article IV – Election of Officers

The officers of this club shall be elected at the first regular meeting in _____ (month). They shall hold office for one year. All active members are eligible to run for an office and to vote. Voting is by majority rule and done by secret ballot.

Any officer position that becomes vacant shall be filled by someone appointed by the executive committee.

Article V – Officers

An officer candidate shall have been a member in good standing of the club for at least three months prior to elections.

Officers shall not succeed themselves.

Any person appointed to fill an unexpired term may be eligible for the same office the following year.

The officers of this club shall include: president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and reporter. Duties of the individual offices are:

Section 1: Duties of the president shall be:

- (a) to preside at all meetings of the club, enforce the bylaws and exercise supervision over the affairs of the club.
- (b) to appoint standing and special committees.
- (c) to serve as an ex officio member of each committee, except the nominating committee.
- (d) to serve as delegate of the club to the County 4-H Council.

Section 2: Duties of the vice president shall be:

- (a) to assist the president.
- (b) to perform the duties of the president in the absence of that officer.
- (c) to serve as chairman of the program committee.
- (d) to plan all club educational programs one year in advance.

Section 3: Duties of the secretary shall be:

- (a) to keep a full and correct record of all proceedings of the club.
- (b) to have charge of club correspondence.
- (c) to keep the roll and read the minutes at each meeting.

Section 4: Duties of the treasurer shall be:

- (a) to prepare a budget for approval by the club.
- (b) to receive, hold and pay out all moneys of the club as designated by the adopted budget. Any expenditures over \$ _____ not included in the budget, must be approved by the executive committee.
- (c) to keep an accurate record of the receipt and expenditures of all funds.
- (d) to present a financial statement when requested to do so.
- (e) to serve as chairman of the finance committee.

Section 5: Duties of the reporter shall be:

- (a) to report activities of the club to local news media.
- (b) to report activities to the county Extension educator and/or in the county newsletter.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall be comprised of the 4-H Club President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer, with the 4-H Club Leader acting in a non-voting, advisory role.

Article VI– Committees

Section 1 – Standing Committees

In addition to the Executive Committee and Audit Committee, Standing or Special committees will be created as needed. Members are expected to volunteer for committee assignments. The president has the authority to appoint committee chairs and members.

Standing committees for this club include: _____

- Program committee
- Nominating committee

Section 2 – Audit Committee

An audit committee consisting of one member, one parent, and one volunteer – all of whom do not have signatory rights on the financial accounts – will conduct an audit of the club financial records. The club leader will see that the audit and records are turned in to the Extension Office at the end of each 4-H year. (September)

Article VII – Fiscal Operations

The club will follow all University of Missouri 4-H fiscal policies as specified in the “*Missouri 4-H Treasurer Record Book*” as well as state and federal regulations.

Article VIII – Volunteers & Parents

Volunteers and parents chaperoning, advising, transporting or generally accepting responsibility members other than their own children must have been successfully screened and accepted as a 4-H Volunteer for the current program year by the Missouri 4-H Youth Development program.

Article IX – Amendments

This constitution or by-laws may be amended at any regular meeting by a two-thirds vote cast by those in attendance at a 4-H Club meeting, providing written amendments have been presented at the previous regular club meeting.

Article X – Dissolution

Upon consideration of dissolution the members of _____ 4-H club agree to the following procedure:

The _____ 4-H club shall be terminated and dissolved by a majority vote of the membership in favor of dissolution and termination of the 4-H club. The member shall also vote on how to disburse club resources for a project or activity or contribution to the betterment of the community or betterment of the county or state 4-H program. When a 4-H club dissolves or fails to reorganize without vote of the members, the resources become the property of the County 4-H Council or the Missouri 4-H Foundation after a waiting period of one year. During the one-year waiting period, a representative of the county 4-H program will maintain the account.

Upon dissolution and termination of the _____ 4-H club for any reason, the offices shall take full account of the _____ 4-H club assets and liabilities, and shall liquidate the assets and shall apply and distribute the proceeds there from the following order:

- a. To the payment of the debts and liabilities of the _____ 4-H club.
- b. To the setting up of any reserves that the officers may deem reasonable for the purpose of paying any unforeseen liabilities or obligations of the club.
- c. The remaining balance shall be distributed to the _____ County 4-H Council or the Missouri 4-H Foundation for the purpose of program development directly related to the enrichment of the 4-H youth program.

Each of the members shall be provided a statement prepared by the _____ 4-H club outlining the assets, liabilities, and the distribution upon complete liquidation. Upon compliance with these terms and the distribution of funds, the 4-H club shall cease.

4-H Club Bylaws

Attendance requirements for members

4-H Members must have attended one over half of all regularly scheduled and conducted 4-H Club meetings to successfully complete the 4-H year. In addition, the same attendance requirements may also apply to eligibility for most County, Regional and state events.

If a 4-H club member cannot meet the minimum requirements due to college enrollment, family situation, employment or other factors, the club leader may agree with the member to create options for completion. This agreement should be planned in and agreed to in advance by the volunteer club leader and the member. A written copy of the Individual 4-H Member Comprehensive Plan should be filed at the extension center.

Volunteer involvement

Volunteers working with members other than their own children must have been successfully screened and accepted as a 4-H Volunteer for the current program year by the Missouri 4-H Youth Development program.

Parental involvement

At least one parent or legal guardian from each family is asked (expected?) to attend each regular 4-H Club Meeting.

Successful 4-H membership usually requires a great deal of parental support. Parents may be asked to chaperon 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. Parents volunteering to chaperon events, drive members (other than their own children) to or from meetings or events, must have been successfully screened and accepted by the Missouri 4-H Youth Development program.

Size of the Club

(In most cases clubs do not specify a club size, however clubs can limit the number of members due to space limitations. Consult with the 4-H Specialist before proposing or setting a maximum club size)

Club Dues

This 4-H club & 4-H Council will assess voluntary dues of _____ to cover club expenses for educational programming. If members cannot pay these dues, they need to discuss the situation with the 4-H leader.

Re-enrollment deadlines and expectations for the club:

{Specific annual deadlines and expectations may be more appropriate in the Annual Club Rules section below)

Member responsibilities to the club:

re: demonstrations, community service, attendance. (Including collegiate members and "unusual" family situations)

{Specific annual deadlines and expectations may be more appropriate in the Annual Club Rules section below)

Member responsibilities to the 4-H Council:

County wide service projects
Fund raisers
Abide by 4-H Council rulings and deadlines

{Specific annual deadlines and expectations may be more appropriate in the Annual Club Rules section below)

Voted upon and adopted : _____

Voted upon and revised : _____

Voted upon and revised : _____

Annual 4-H Club Rules

The Club Leader and Club Officers usually establish these.

These may be included generally in the By-laws above, but important details may change year to year and be appropriately included here. These rules may relate to requirements having to do with:

- The meeting location (the building has it's own rules and requirements?)
- Enrollment and event dates
- Annually planned fund raisers
- Community Service goals and expectations for the coming year
- Program presentations for the year: Demonstrations, Speakers, Health talks, etc.