
WELCOME TO
THE WORLD OF
4-H 
BASICS FOR NEW LEADERS

Planning and Conducting 4-H Club Meetings

Key Ideas

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

You may have questions about planning and conducting your 4-H club meetings. Information about the basic, everyday ingredients of successful 4-H meetings are included here.

Setting goals with your 4-H club

It's helpful for you and your 4-H members together to set a few basic goals for your club's first year. (Not too many or you may get discouraged!) Based on the number of members and their age range, you will want to consider different needs as you plan your activities together. Please refer to the listed references for guidelines and specific help. Also, you'll find your project leader guide/Greentop have valuable information on setting club goals. Be sure to read the project leader guide/Greentop carefully! Again, you may not be able to include everything in the guide in your club meetings, but you can pick out some of the most basic and important project skills to emphasize.

Encourage 4-H members to set personal goals. You will want to do this for yourself, also. You've heard the saying, "How do you know if you've gotten there if you don't know where you're going?"

Planning a 4-H club calendar

As soon as your club has selected goals, it's really helpful to plan a yearly calendar of activities. If a year seems overwhelming, try to plan for at least two to four meetings in advance, or plan for the broad general topics to reach the goals for the club year, and periodically fill in the specifics for a couple of meetings in advance. Be sure to involve your 4-H members and their parents in developing this plan. There are many excellent club program ideas in the references listed at the end of this publication. You and your club will want to refer to these while developing your plan. Your project leader's guide also has some excellent suggestions.

Have each member bring a calendar with space to write in the information from your planning session. This calendar also can be used as the club's plan is developed, writing in notes on the dates for time, place and other specifics. Members can take their calendar home, and this helps parents plan, too. Another way is to make a list of dates and significant specifics, then duplicate the list for each member to take home and post.

Find out from your county Extension staff what your county 4-H calendar includes, especially the dates of those events, contests, fairs, etc. designed primarily for your project area. Counties often have a newsletter for 4-H leaders listing all activities. Be sure you are on the mailing list, and then share this information with your members.

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Club officers and committees

Election of officers gives the members an opportunity to develop leadership skills and responsibility.

Suggested 4-H club officers are:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer (if needed)
- Club Reporter (for publicity reports)

Other possible officers or committees are recreation leaders, sergeant at arms, scrapbook keeper, telephone committee, meeting host or hostess coordinator, field trip committee, entertainment committee, cleanup committee, etc.

A Handbook for *4-H Club Officers* (200. A-12) is available. This publication describes the duties of each officer, how to conduct meetings, and the duties of Song Leader and Recreation Leader.

Other club officer's materials available are: *4-H Secretary's Book* (200.A-6) and *Parliamentary Procedure in Action* (200.A-30).

Many leaders like to have each member be an officer or a committee chairperson. The officers and committee chairperson then become a planning committee to develop the yearly calendar of activities for your club.

If your club decides it's necessary to collect dues or have a fund-raising activity to establish a treasury, be sure to check with you county Extension staff about guidelines and policies. In setting up a club bank account, you should not use a personal name or individual social security number. To establish a 4-H club

bank account, you may be asked to complete "Form SS-4."

Teaching the 4-H pledge, motto, and symbols

It helps members and adults to better understand 4-H if the leader presents the 4-H pledge, motto and symbols to the group early in the club year. They are all described in the publication, *Club Leaders Handbook* (200. A-1). The hand motions to use with the pledges are also explained there.

The leader may find it helpful to make a poster to use at each meeting, showing the 4-H pledge and the 4-H motto, so members can read it while memorizing it. After the first meeting, each member can take turns leading the U.S. flag salute and the 4-H pledge. Some members also may want to give a short talk on the meaning of the 4-H symbols. Small 4-H flag sets are available through the *4-H Source Book* at 301-961-2934 or www.4-hmall.org. You can order a set for approximately \$6.00. Other club meeting aids also are available in this catalog or on-line.

Members learn from meetings

Well-planned meetings give members an opportunity to:

- Share ideas
- Acquire new knowledge
- Enjoy recreational activities
- Develop self-confidence and leadership
- Participate in decision making
- Organize a meeting in a way that seems best to them

Officers conduct the meeting but need your guidance in advance. Arrange time to meet with them so they are prepared and can assume complete responsibility.

Possible agenda items for a 4-H club meeting

Following is a suggested agenda for a 4-H club meeting.

1. Call to order
2. U.S. flag salute
3. 4-H pledge
4. Roll Call
5. Minutes of last meeting (if any)
6. Unfinished business (if any)
7. New business
8. Recreation, songs or other social activity (also could be at the beginning or end of the meeting)
9. Special feature, project learning, or member presentations
10. Refreshments (if appropriate or provided; also could be available before the meeting when members arrive; depends on the time of day the meeting is held)
11. Meeting adjourned

There are endless variations of this agenda--and variety certainly helps to make the meeting more interesting and lively. Your county Extension staff or other volunteers may have suggestions for learning games or other fun activities.

Some clubs prefer to alternate business meetings with project meetings, or simply to have short, informal business sessions at some point during a project meeting. You might consider trying out a variety of methods to determine which works best with your age group, the size of your club, and your project area.

If club leaders want to teach their members parliamentary procedure, *Parliamentary Procedures In Action* (200.A-30) is a useful publication.

Involving parents with your club

There are a variety of methods for getting parents involved--in fact, successful 4-H membership usually includes a great deal of parental support. The "classic" reason for becoming a leader is because a son or daughter wants to join 4-H, and it is logical to encour-

age other parents to be assistant leaders, activity leaders, project leaders or resource leaders. Don't hesitate to ask for help.

Some clubs strongly encourage parents to attend all meetings with their children. Parents may be asked to chaperon club activities, 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 the project. It could be regarding citizenship, leadership, community service, or other topics.

Tours, activity days, etc.

Your club members will really 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 events should be included in your total number of meetings. An excellent source for ideas on where to take your club on tour is to ask other 4-H leaders.

Your 4-H members will enjoy doing some of the planning for a field trip, and may even want to invite another club to join them for the trip.

A special activity day is another excellent teaching tool. Perhaps you can invite a parent, a resource leader, or a friend with a special skill to teach it at one of your regular meetings.

Have a good meeting!

If you have further questions or concerns, do contact your county Extension staff or another volunteer leader. They all want to help you succeed.



Action steps

- With the other 4-H leaders, work with club members to set goals for your club.
- Encourage 4-H members to set personal goals.
- Set some goals for yourself for the coming year.
- With the other 4-H leaders, work with

- club members to plan a yearly 4-H club calendar.
- Help members select officers.
- If your club decides to have a treasury, contact the county Extension staff for guidelines, policies, and ideas for fund-raising activities.
- Decide on the method you want to use to help members learn the 4-H pledge and 4-H motto.
- Meet with the club officers to plan the agenda for meetings.
- Decide on the level of support you would like from parents. Determine ways to involve them in various meetings and activities.
- Plan some interesting tours and activity days with the members and other leaders/parents.

Reference Materials

Copies are available at your county Extension Office and many are on the 4-H Website.

- Club Leaders' Handbook, (200.A-1)
- New Mexico 4-H Policies and Procedures Handbook, (200.A-3)
- 4-H Club Secretary's Book, (200.A-6)

- Parliamentary Procedure in Action, (200.A-30)
- Strengthening Your 4-H Group (200. A-11)
- The video or DVD *Welcome to the World of 4-H: Basics for New Leaders*

In addition, go to the 4-H Website for a 4-H Volunteer e-Learning Course at <http://nm4h.nmsu.edu>.

Contacting your county Extension office

To locate an address and phone number, look in your local telephone directory. It may be listed in any number of ways in the white pages or in one of the special sections. For example, it might be listed as: 4-H; New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service; (county name) Extension Service.

If you have access to the web, go to <http://cahe.nmsu.edu/> and select "County and State Extension Offices" at the left side of the page.

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