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

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# Starting a 4-H Club or Group

## Key Ideas

- How to recruit 4-H members and how many should we have?
- How can I enroll my group as a 4-H club?
- What about project materials?
- Are there dues for 4-H members?
- What about insurance?
- Where will our club meet?
- How often will our club meet?

**T**hese are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about starting a 4-H club. As you review this material, make note of your ideas and questions. Highlight information you find especially useful.

## Recruiting 4-H members and additional adult leaders

First of all, how many members? 4-H clubs can have as few as two or three members or as many as the leader feels can be included effectively in the group. Some suggest that 6 to 10 members per adult leader is an optimum number. However, it depends on the number and variety of projects in your club and the age of 4-H members. It also depends on how many other leaders will be working with you. Limit your first group to a number with which you and your coleaders feel comfortable!

Recruiting members is seldom hard to do. Contact your county Extension Office--they usually have names of people who want to join a club in your area. Your Extension staff may have a recruiting program or other ideas for recruiting new club members.

You may find it helpful to recruit other adults to help with club leadership. Interested parents, 4-H alumni, or friends often are willing to help. This gives the leader much-needed assistance and provides continuity for club meetings. An older and experienced teen member can help teach younger members and lead activities.

When recruiting, we must be certain our programs are available to all people equally without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, disability, and disabled veteran or Vietnam-era veteran status.

## How can I enroll my group as a 4-H club?

Your county Extension office has the necessary enrollment forms for you to complete and submit to the office. Enrollment is necessary for participation in 4-H.

We use a computer-based enrollment system, which means the forms must be filled out completely and accurately. Be sure to check the codes that accompany the form. The 4-H year starts each fall on October 1 and runs through September 30. All 4-H members and leaders must reenroll every year. Each county has a due date for enrollments. It's a good idea to enroll early so you and your members stay continually on the mailing list and receive notices of all events and activities. Most counties also have a deadline for enrollment additions and changes in order to be eligible to participate in state and county fairs and other activities.

After your club enrollment form has been submitted, check with your county Extension office to see whether member recognition items are available.

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## What about project materials?

Each county office of the NMSU Cooperative Extension Service has the State 4-H Projects and Literature Handbook (200.B-3) for the eleven project areas: animal science, home economics, personal growth and development, family life, self determined, horticulture, natural sciences, creative arts, engineering, consumer education, and Cloverbuds. This publication lists all materials available in each area for leaders and members. If your club hasn't received such a publication, please ask for one.

You'll find the project leader's guide to be particularly helpful, since it contains not only information about the project, but also many helpful ideas on teaching methods and learning activities.

The NMSU Cooperative Extension Service has a cost-recovery program for all publications, including 4-H materials. Check with your County Extension Staff about the cost of publications in your county.

## Are there state dues for 4-H members?

No, 4-H members do not have to pay state dues. Some clubs may decide to pay for the cost of supplies by assessing a small dues fee per member or by working together on a fund-raising project. Counties may assess a per-member fee, collected and turned in by the volunteer leader, to cover specified costs (e.g., insurance, newsletters).

If you and your club choose to hold a fund-raising project, be sure to check with your county Extension staff about fund-raising guidelines and policies in your county. They also have ideas about activities that have been successful fund-raisers in your area.

## What about insurance?

When volunteers have been accepted and duly appointed in the 4-H program, they automatically have liability insurance coverage through New Mexico State University when leading a 4-H group or activity in a

responsible manner. Check with your county Extension Office for details on how the program works.

Accident Insurance is not automatic. If you choose, your 4-H club can apply for accident insurance. A number of companies offer accident insurance plans for youth groups. Annual premiums usually are low cost (e.g., \$1 per member or \$2 per motorcycle or horse club member). This insurance covers your 4-H members (leaders also may be covered) from the time you leave home until you return home from any adult supervised 4-H activity. Insurance also is available for special activities or events on a per-day basis. You can obtain forms for each of these plans at your county Extension office. The 4-H leader must complete and send the forms directly to the insurance company.

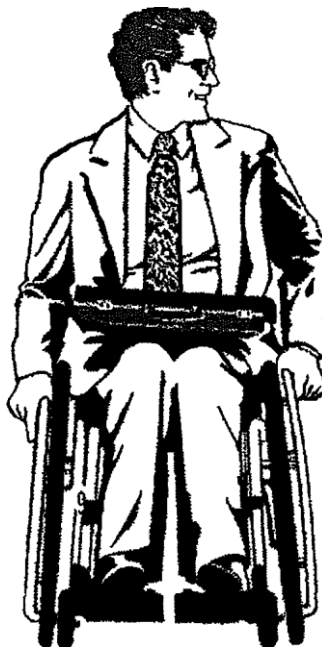
## Where will our club meet?

Where your club meets probably will be determined by the number and location of members. It may be easiest for the club to meet at the leader's home (or it may be the only available location). Many clubs rotate meetings from one member's home to another; each family then has an opportunity to host a meeting. Other meeting places could be public school buildings, churches, fairgrounds, etc. Many schools, community facilities, and other groups are willing to let their facilities be used for 4-H activities.

## How often will our club meet?

There are several possibilities in choosing a day and time for club meetings, such as:

- Once a week, after school (this works well for elementary-age members)
- Once every 2 weeks, after school, or on a week night
- Once a month, on a week night
- Once a month, on a Saturday or Sunday (sometimes this works best for clubs when members have a wide age span)
- Other variations, limited only by needs of your club members



Counties may recommend a specific or minimum number of club meetings per year. Check with your county Extension staff for any requirements they have for number of meetings or member attendance. This provides continuity for the club as well as time for project development and accomplishment of individual and club goals.

Some projects can be completed on a short-term or seasonal basis. Some clubs enroll at the beginning of the year but may plan to meet later for a shorter period of time (e.g., for a 3-or-6 month time period).

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

## Action Steps

- With the other leaders, develop you member recruitment plan.
- Decide on the leader and member materials you will need.
- Decide how potential club and/or project costs will be handled.
- Meet with members, parents, and other leaders to discuss where the club will meet and how often.
- Talk with your county Extension staff about insurance coverage.
- Attend scheduled leader training(s), as appropriate.



## 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 Policies and Procedures Handbook (200. A-3)
- Strengthening Your 4-H Group (200. A-11)
- State 4-H Projects and Literature Handbook (200. B-3)
- New Mexico 4-H Youth Development Curriculum Kits and Audio Visual Materials (500. A-1)
- Insurance Information material
- The video or DVD *Welcome to the World of 4-H: Basics for New Leaders*

In addition, go to the 4-H Web site 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/](http://cahe.nmsu.edu) and select "County and State Extension Offices" on the left side of the page.

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