

4-H Volunteer Leaders' Series

Successful 4-H Meetings

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A successful 4-H meeting is the result of planning. Good meetings do not just happen – they are planned. The time and thought given to advance preparation will result in better club meetings and increased participation and enthusiasm by members.

4-H members want to be active and learn. As a leader, you can help to make meetings both enjoyable and educational. In each session include activities that members feel are important to them. Involve the group in planning meetings, and you'll be able to stimulate continuing interest. As a result, you'll have 4-H meetings that are fun and provide learning experiences for youth. Well-planned meetings give youth an opportunity to:

- Make new friends
- Share ideas
- Acquire new knowledge
- Enjoy recreational activities
- Develop self-confidence and leadership
- Participate in decision making

Where?

Explore available meeting places and consider how well each one will meet the needs of the program and

the youth. Light, available space and room arrangement influence meetings. How large is the membership? How much room do you need for activities or recreation? Members' homes may work well, but public and civic facilities may also be used.

Try to arrange a meeting place that will fit the size of the group. Seating persons in a circle or semi-circle will create a feeling of informality and friendliness. More is learned when a positive atmosphere is created by a casual setting. Different seating arrangements help break up fixed groups. Hearing and participation will also be better.

How Often?

There is no "right" answer to this question. Some leaders think that frequent meetings should be held when new groups are formed. They feel this helps take advantage of initial interest. Many clubs meet monthly. It helps to set a definite meeting time each month, i.e., the second Monday or the third Tuesday.

If the club is a project club, the project work meeting and the club business meeting might be conducted on the same night. If the club is a community club with members



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enrolled in several projects, the project work meetings and the regular club meeting are usually conducted on different nights.

How Long?

Should the meetings last one or two hours? The ages of the members, subject and activities all affect this decision. Older members usually stay with an activity longer than younger ones. Younger members sometimes have early bedtimes, and this affects evening meetings on school nights. Be clear when meetings start and finish so parents can make transportation plans. By all means, start the meeting on time and end on time.

What Happens?

Every regular club meeting should include a variety of experiences. Plan for a balance of business, education and recreation. The group should work together in selecting what is to happen and how it will be done. The 4-H Volunteer Leaders' Series fact sheets in the section called "Planning" located on the web will help the planning committee in its work.

Activities for early arrivals help the group develop a spirit of togetherness. Members can plan and lead games to help others have fun. Helping everyone feel welcome and accepted is vital to enthusiastic participation and cooperation.

Younger Members

Younger members feel the spirit of belonging when they see flags, banners and other symbols at the meeting. They like to wear jackets, quote pledges, mottoes and creeds. These identify the meeting as 4-H and give the members the feeling they are part of a big organization.

Although most 4-H'ers want to be active and take part in the program, younger members are especially pleased to be asked to lead the pledges. It gives them recognition and is something they can do well.

Providing for different "age interests" within a club can be easily accomplished through programs which include a wide variety of activities.

Program Patterns

Programs vary from club to club. The following program pattern is only a suggestion. Remember, clubs should plan to suit their own needs.

We all like something a little different, something extra that we weren't expecting. Try a new idea occasionally. The surprise may not take more than five minutes and may be a new song, a special skit or a special guest.

Club Meeting

Call to Order

Song

Roll Call with Responses

Review Meaning of Emblem and Repeat Pledges

Business

Reading and approval of minutes

Treasurer's report

Committee reports

Unfinished business

New business

Announcements

Program

Demonstration

Judging activity

Project lesson

Guest speaker

Video

Tour or group activity

Opportunity to learn by doing

Adjournment

Recreation

Refreshments

Business

The business portion of the meeting should be an example of "democracy in action." Members learn parliamentary procedure and the decision-making process.

To keep the business meeting interesting and moving, officers should plan it with help from the organizational leader before the meeting begins. The president will feel more confident if the business to be discussed is planned before the meeting.

If you or your 4-H members need additional help with parliamentary procedure, read the fact sheet “Conducting Meetings.”

Complicated business referred to committees for study and recommendation speeds the meeting. This gives members added opportunity to participate in activities and feel they are an important part of the group.

You will want to make sure every member understands what is being discussed and that each member feels free to ask questions, offer opinions and help make the decisions.

Be sure to read the fact sheet “Making Group Decisions.”

Education

The educational portion of the meeting gives members opportunities to learn skills, develop good work habits, learn to set realistic goals for themselves and experience the thrill of achievement. This “learning by doing” is experienced through work on individual projects, demonstrations, illustrated talks, tours, discussions, judging activities and a variety of other things in which the members participate.

Demonstrations or illustrated talks give each member an opportunity to share project work with the club. They also help the member develop public speaking ability and poise before an audience. The number of demonstrations or talks in your program depends on the membership. Large clubs may need to include two or three presentations at each meeting so that every member has an opportunity to participate. Individual project leaders can help members prepare for their presentations.

Recreation and Music

Recreation, music or a social event will do wonders for morale. The age, sex and size of the group determine the kinds of activities. Those responsible for recreation also need to consider the meeting place, time and preferences of group members.

In addition to games and music, recreation might include seasonal parties such as a Valentine’s, St. Patrick’s or May Day Party. Halloween treasure hunts or holiday caroling are other ideas. When refreshments are provided, coordinate them with the recreation theme or time of year. Other recreational events might include picnics, hayrides, wiener roasts, skating, swimming or pizza parties. Relating recreation to special days or celebrations ensures variety.

A 4-H meeting is a good place for 4-H members to learn the state anthem, “Arkansas.” Our state historical song is “The Arkansas Traveler.” The words and music to both of these songs can be found on the web in the 4-H Volunteer Leaders’ Series fact sheets 4HCH9 and 4HCH10 in the “Meetings” section.

Refreshments

Many clubs serve refreshments at meetings although they are not essential. If your club does have them, see that it’s a way for members to learn how to select simple, nutritious and inexpensive refreshments or snacks as well as how to serve them.

Looking Ahead

Anticipation is half the fun. If members of the group are to remain active, they need to look forward to the next meeting. Make sure they know its date, time and place. Alert them to the focus of the program, and be sure individual members are aware of specific responsibilities.

As you and your group learn more about 4-H, you may want to expand your interests and go beyond the basics of business, education and recreation. Ideas for other educational and service programs are numerous.

Possibilities include the areas of health, safety, citizenship, educational tours, community service, judging activities and international understanding. A variety of fun activities adds enthusiasm and enjoyment to the 4-H club program.

Evaluation

Evaluating meetings can help strengthen your 4-H program. This can be done by the leaders, the officers, a committee or the entire club. Consider such questions as: What did we accomplish? What were the strong points? Weak points? How can we make

the next meeting better? Are we meeting our individual and collective goals?

The questions below will help you further evaluate your 4-H program. Discussing strengths and weaknesses with your club members will give individuals opportunities to contribute to the total program.

	Always	Sometimes	Never
1. Members and leaders enjoy coming to meetings.			
2. Each individual in the group voices personal opinions and tries out ideas.			
3. Meetings and activities are fun as well as informational.			
4. Members learn at least one new thing at each meeting.			
5. Members are kept informed on what is happening.			
6. Leaders and members are enthusiastic about what they are doing in 4-H.			
7. All members feel they are "a part of" or "belong to" the group.			
8. Members feel they are making progress.			

This material was adapted by Jean Pace, 4-H Volunteer, Fulton County, Arkansas, from materials developed at Michigan State University and the University of Missouri - Columbia. The material is recommended for use in Arkansas by Darlene Z. Baker, Ph.D., State Leader - 4-H Youth Development, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service.

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