



Keys to Your First 4-H Working Exhibit

Do you like to work with people? Do you like to share ideas from your projects or work with our hands? Do you like to work in an informal way? If you answered yes to these questions, then you're ready to begin planning your first working exhibit.

This resource has been written to help you give your first 4-H working exhibit for your club, county communication event or some other group. What you learn in 4-H about public speaking can be used in school and all of your life.

What is a 4-H Working Exhibit?

- ✓ A communication activity that involves “teaching or sharing”.
- ✓ In the teaching or sharing there are steps or procedures that can be easily broken down and shared with your audience.
- ✓ The steps or procedures that involve the audience need to have something for them to make, taste, smell, or learn a new skill. You might also have them pick up some literature or information to take home that explains what you were teaching.

Why Should You Give a Working Exhibit?

- ✓ You will find it can be fun. You did a similar thing when you stood in front of your class and did “Show and Tell”. A working exhibit can be the same kind of experience. You are showing, telling, and sharing information on a selected topic doing the steps or procedures with your audience.
- ✓ You will learn how to speak before a group. A working exhibit is an informal setting where you might need to repeat a step or procedure, or you may be stopped with questions from the audience. It will help you to think quickly and not always to know ahead of time what will be asked. You will gain confidence in yourself as a “quick thinker”!
- ✓ You will find it easy to learn in 4-H. It will encourage you to study more deeply into some subject that has particular interest for you.
- ✓ You will learn how to organize your thoughts.
- ✓ You will be teaching others.
- ✓ You will have an opportunity to meet other people your own age.

Now It's Time to Begin...



Key #1 – Select a Topic

You can't just stand up in front of a group and expect to know what to say. You need to get ideas. Here are some ways to get you started thinking of a topic you might like to do for your working exhibit.

- ✓ Review your project materials (member's guides)
- ✓ Make a list of things you like to do at home or school.
- ✓ Make a list of things you have learned on a tour or trip.

- ✓ Make a list of important events or projects going on in your community, school, or club.
- ✓ Make a list of things you do well and would like to tell or teach others about.
- ✓ Ideas from a TV show, a video or computer program.
- ✓ Look up subjects that interest you in the card catalog or computer catalog in your media center/library.
- ✓ Talk to your parents, your 4-H leaders, or your teachers about possible topics.
- ✓ Talk to experts in an area that interest you.



Key #2 – Research Your Selected Topic

As you begin your research use your resources you have available to make notes about your topic. Write down information about the topic in steps and procedures that will allow you to present the information to your audience.

Take your research that you've found and put each step or procedure on a separate index card. Then rethink your subject by steps. Try to separate each step. Then put the index cards in the order you would show the steps. You should be able to see that there are definite steps and procedures to show. This will allow you a good place to start and stop with your audience.

As you put each step on a card, think about how you can show that step. The audience may be your 4-H club or an audience of young people or adults. Think of the topic you chose and the steps involved will work with people of all ages.

In each step or procedure think how you can explain or show that step so the audience can do the same step. Think about any questions the audience might have about each step. Will the audience probably have more questions over certain steps?

As you continue to write down the steps to your topic think also about the finished product. Is it something they will be able to remember to do again on their own? If not, then do you need to give them a set of directions?



Key #3 – Tips to Help As You Plan Your Working Exhibit

Communication is a process that happens when one person or group shares information with another person or group. There are two roles in any act of communication. The first role is that the sender thinks of an idea and sends the message. This can be done verbally, nonverbally(visually), or in writing. The second role is that the receiver must be able to receive that message and be able to understand the message. The following diagram shows how the communication model works.



A working exhibit does not have an introduction, body, and closing. It is a type of communication where you might need to stop during your “teaching of steps”. This is necessary

if people want you to repeat a step, ask questions, and possibly need extra help with a new or different procedure. If you find it difficult to make your topic fit into an informal teaching, sharing time, perhaps you should do an educational presentation. (See resources entitled “10 Keys to Your First Presentation”.)

A working exhibit gets the audience to participate through smell, taste, touch, or by encouraging questions. By answering questions, rather than delivering a speech, you are involving the audience.

A working exhibit is where people may stay awhile and then walk away. They are not a captive audience. If it isn't what they want to learn, they will listen for a while and then leave. Don't feel bad! Just proceed with whoever is present at your working exhibit area. Compare a working exhibit to going fishing – you have to bait the hook and then reel in the fish. In a working exhibit, you bait the audience and reel them in with your ideas.

A working exhibitor may need to convince people to stop and become involved. Ways to do this might include saying, “Would you like to try to _____?” “How about learning _____?” “Would you like a sample of _____?” “Would you be interested in learning about saving money, energy, or time by doing _____?” If no one is stopping at your exhibit, continue to do the work by yourself. People will notice that you like to do it and they'll stop by. Don't leave your working exhibit and wander around.



Key #4 – Setting Up Your Working Exhibit

Setting up an attractive working exhibit space also invites people to stop by and try your ideas or see what you have to share. A table covering that goes with the materials you use helps attract people. The clothes you wear can also encourage people to try your ideas. Wearing green and white and a 4-H emblem helps people recognize that you are a 4-H member.

Organize your materials so when you need to get more supplies, you'll be able to get them quickly. When doing your working exhibit be able to answer questions about prices of materials and where the audience can buy them. Keep the price of items in mind when picking out a topic. You might even want to make a display poster telling what the materials you used cost. If you use food, make sure the cost is not too great. If you think there will be a large audience, try using mini-samples, or substitute a less expensive item, such as crackers for cookies if you are having your audience learn how to decorate with frosting.

Nice posters also attract people to your working exhibit. Remember these suggestions about posters as you plan your space. Consider how far away your audience may be. If your audience viewing distance is 25 feet, then letters should be at least one and one-half inches tall for easy reading. Be sure to leave plenty of space between letters. Limit your poster to two or three colors. Have one main color. Black, green, red and blue are good colors and will show up well on white background. Yellow does not show up very well unless on a dark color poster board. You do not need to buy ready-made letters, but you should use a ruler and draw straight lines. Use a dictionary for correct spelling! You'll learn more about making posters if you do them yourself.



Key #5 – Practice

It is important to practice your working exhibit for your club, your family, or your classmates at school. Let them proceed through the steps with you. You will be able to tell how smooth your steps are when you have people with whom you are familiar be your working exhibit audience the first several times. This will help you determine if you need to explain or show some steps or procedures in more detail.

Practice is important even when a working exhibit is on an informal level. You will still need to be well informed about your topic. You probably will have more background information that you researched than you are able to tell. However, you might have a person who asks a related question and you have that little bit of extra information all ready for them “in your head”.



Key #6 – Is There a Time Limit For a Working Exhibit?

In most clubs and county events there is a time limit set for 4-Hers who give their working exhibit. This means you might be repeating your steps a number of times. (If you would rather only do the steps one time, and not have to stop in the middle to explain steps or answer questions, then you should consider giving an educational presentation.)

And Now... You've given your working exhibit... Congratulations are in order! Even if your knees were knocking, your palms sweating, or your heart bumping, no one knew that but you. You had practiced and your polished communication was given. When you are ready to evaluate, think if you used the 4 R's of Communication: RESPECT – for those who are listening to you, RESEARCH – used your research skills to find out more about your selected topic, RESPONSIBILITY – to tell others what you have learned, RESOURCES – what you used to communicate your ideas.



Key #7 – Evaluation

Answer the following questions about your working exhibit with Yes, No or Needs Improvement.

- ✓ Was my exhibit attractive?
- ✓ Did many people stop at my exhibit?
- ✓ Was I enthusiastic about my topic?
- ✓ Did I involve the audience?
- ✓ Did I keep the audience's attention?
- ✓ Did I speak loud enough for everyone to hear?
- ✓ Did I present my topic in the proper order/steps?
- ✓ Have I done enough research on my topic?
- ✓ Were my posters easy to read and neatly done?
- ✓ Did I have fun?
- ✓ Did I use the 4 R's of Communication?

If you answered yes, then good for you! If you answered no, ask yourself why? If you answered needs improvement, ask yourself what could I have changed or do different the next time.

In conclusion – go ahead and plan a second working exhibit. Perhaps you'd like to do a team or a cooperative working exhibit with two or more members of your club. Many times, several club members can do a working exhibit. This really helps in getting the steps across to an audience. Even an entire club can give a working exhibit although this involves lots of time and patience when scheduling for practice.



Key #8 – The Door to Success

You have now unlocked the door to 4-H Working Exhibits. You have found the key to successful communications.

Ideas taken from:

- ✓ Show Off Your Skill. Do you Own 4-H Working Exhibit, Iowa State University, June 1985 reprinted
- ✓ Suggestions For a Working Exhibit by Doris Goering
- ✓ Working Exhibit Evaluation VI-948-C
- ✓ Training For More Effective Communications, California State Polytechnic College
- ✓ Communication Process and Leadership, John L. Tait and John A. Wibe, Iowa State University Extension, 1983 reprinted
- ✓ 4 R's for 4-H Communication Program by Janet Anderson

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