

IOWA 4-H SAFETY & EDUCATION SHOOTING SPORTS PROGRAM
EXTENSION & OUTREACH 4-H YOUTH PROGRAMS
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
4-H EXTENSION YOUTH BUILDING
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Frequently Asked Questions

Why does 4-H have a Shooting Sports program?

4-H SESS programs are valuable for helping young people develop self-confidence, personal discipline, responsibility, teamwork, self-esteem, sportsmanship as well as other life skills. The skills required for the responsible use of firearms carries over into many other parts of life. 4-H Shooting Sports Programs provide a positive experience for youth and promote the safe and ethical use of firearms. It is our belief that firearm education *reduces* gun accidents. Hunting and shooting have been a strong part of our American tradition, and the 4-H shooting sports programs helps to continue this tradition through involvement of the whole family.

How did the 4-H Shooting Sports program get started?

Shooting Sports has been a part of 4-H since the 1930s when there were shooting competitions and some shooting sports programs at 4-H camps. However, there was no organized training program where leaders received training to teach youth about shooting. In 1976, staff members in Texas realized a need to for a program to train their volunteer shooting sports leaders. A training program was established and 4-H Shooting Sports was born. The SESS program extended to other states in 1977.

Do you have to be a 4-H Member to be in a 4-H Shooting Sports club?

Yes, Shooting Sports Club members are required to be part of the 4-H program. Contact your local extension office for more information on how to join 4-H.

Why is it so important that club members enroll as regular 4-H members as well?

To ensure our positive youth development focus and for ISU liability reasons, all youth in our shooting sports programs must be club members. If a young person were a member of another county club, they would only need to pay the program development fee. If you have a special interest club or program that includes non-members, they still must pay the program development fee and enroll as 4-H members. Our goal is to make sure all of our youth involved in shooting sports have access to all activities, events and programs that their county and the state offers.

What do 4-H Shooting Sports Club members do at club meetings?

Club meetings typically consist of a short program and an hour or more of shooting practice. Many clubs go on field trips and invite guest speakers to share special talents or interesting experiences with club members. Business meetings, fundraising activities and special

community service projects are sometimes part of the club's yearly plan. All shooting sports programs must adhere to the elements that make up a 4-H club experience: communication activities, opportunities for leadership, record-keeping, and be on-going programs at least 6 hours per length per year with a caring adult. In addition to shooting, clubs can add related programs like Wildlife, Reloading, Taxidermy, Trapping, Natural Resources, Gunsmithing, Outdoor Cooking, or anything the club is interested in learning more about.

What shooting sports disciplines are available in Iowa?

We currently have statewide programs offered in Shotgun, Rifle, Archery, and Black Powder (Muzzleloader). Not all of these disciplines may be available in your county, so check with your local club.

How do I find a club to join?

Contact your county extension office to see if there is a club in your county or nearby. Contact the leaders to find out about meeting times and activities. Kids can be members in a county that they do not live in, as long as they attend the meetings and activities. If there is not a club currently offered in your county, you can begin the process of getting one started.

What does it cost?

4-H club members pay a program development fee, usually between \$30 and \$40 per member. The County Extension Council determines the exact amount. Sometimes the club raises money to pay for the fees, sometimes County Extension Councils allocate money to pay the fees from their budget or county endowments. It varies from county to county. In addition, some clubs may decide to pay for local club program costs by assessing a small fee per member or by working together on a fundraising project. Special events such as camps and county fairs may also have registration or entry fees connected to them. There are **scholarships available** through county 4-H Foundations or the State 4-H Foundation to assist with this fee if needed. The 4-H program will never deny a child membership because of cost. Check with your local club for more details on costs.

Do I need to bring my own equipment?

Many counties have equipment provided for the club members. This way anyone can participate. It also lets members find out what they prefer to work with and what fits them the best. However, most clubs allow members to bring their own equipment with some rules if they choose to. Check with your local club for more details on their equipment policies.

If members bring their own equipment does it need inspected before they can use it?

Any firearm or bow that is not the club's property must be inspected and approved by the certified instructor before they use it. The certified instructors in that discipline have the expertise to decide if the firearm is safe, unsafe or should be checked by a gunsmith.

How old do the youth have to be to participate in the program?

Youth need to be at least 9 years old and in 4th grade to participate in a 4-H Shooting Sports club. Youth must be at least 11 years old to participate in shotgun discipline and 12 to be in shotgun competitions. Muzzleloader has similar restrictions – youth must be 12 to participate

and need to have completed all the muzzleloader lessons to compete. In order to qualify and compete at the National 4-H Invitational Match, youth must be 14 years old.

It says members have to be 11 to participate in shotgun and 12 to be in competitions. Is this age 12 to be in shotgun competition, or all competitions?

Shotgun and Muzzleloader are the only areas that have age restrictions for competition and participation. Youth must be 12 years old to compete in shotgun competitions and 12 to participate in Muzzleloader.

What competitions are available for 4-H youth to participate in?

Although competition is only a small part of the program, there are chances for youth to test their skills against others from across the state. There is an annual State shoot for all age levels held usually in the spring. A statewide senior shoot, which serves as the qualifying match for the national invitational held in the fall. The National Invitational held the end of June in Nebraska. The Winter Postal Match (Nov. Dec. Jan. Feb. Mar.) and Summer Postal Match (May. Jun. Jul. Aug. Sep.).

What is a “Postal Match,” and what are the rules for them?

Postal matches are an easy way for the kids to compete against each other without having to travel. Rules are posted on the website and differ by discipline. Youth shoot at their local range with their coach each month for five months and the scores are collected and sent to the state office. When shooting for record, the shooter must inform their coach that this score will be for record. Everyone in all counties use the same rules and targets so completion is as fair as possible. The three highest scores per individual are used for the aggregate score. (The lowest scores are dropped.) To be considered for an award the shooter must post **3** scores.

How do you start a 4-H Shooting Sports Club?

If there currently is no Shooting Sports program in your county and you would like to start one, find a team of adults who are also interested and attend the next statewide training that is available. Then find youth in the county that are interested in joining the club, and enroll with the county extension office. Start meeting with the club, and enjoy learning together!

Can parents be involved?

Yes! In fact, parents are encouraged to be involved. Parents can help ensure safety and act as assistant instructors for many activities.

Who leads the club?

Adult leaders who have completed a state training for the program serve as leaders for the club. These leaders are interested in working with young people on shooting skills, as well as life skills. Certified leaders may also train assistant volunteer instructors to help with their club on the county level. All county-level practices must be performed with at least one certified instructor present in each discipline area that is being taught.

How can I become a certified instructor?

To become a certified instructor you must attend the state certification workshop. In order to be eligible, you must be at least 21 years old and be approved through the child protection and

safety policy screening process. You must also be able to work with both youth and adults, have an interest in shooting sports, and have some knowledge of shooting techniques.

When is the next instructor training?

When an instructor training is scheduled, details are posted on the website.

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/page/shooting-sports-activities-and-events>. Keep checking for more information as it becomes available. We usually hold trainings twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall.

What support is available for club leaders and members?

Certified 4-H Shooting Sports Instructors receive teaching materials when they complete the weekend Shooting Sports Workshop. Each county should have one or more Shooting Sports Coordinators to help leaders with club organization, promotion, and fundraising. In addition, the State 4-H Shooting Sports Committee works to promote the program across the state and to identify corporate sponsors.

If the club purchases a firearm, whose name does the firearm go under? Can a 4-H Shooting Sports Club own a firearm?

The method recommended at National Coordinators training is to have whoever is purchasing the firearm to fill out the federal paper work and sign it with their name but directly underneath write the name of the club - for example, *for Keokuk County 4-H Shooting Sports*. If you can use the county office address in the paper work, that much the better. 4-H Shooting Sports cannot own guns. However, using the office's address and writing the club under your signature gives the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms people a paper trail and should relieve the signee of any negligence as far as ATF is concerned.

One of our members is doing an educational presentation on gun safety and wants to use a shotgun in the presentation. Is this allowed at the county and/or state fair?

For an educational presentation at the county level, the member should bring the gun cased, trigger locks installed, and it should be inoperable. Leave the ammo at home. The member should check the gun in with extension staff when they arrive, obtain it in time for the presentation, and then remove the gun from the presentation area and secure it in their vehicle immediately when finished. Check with your county office to see their rules or policies that pertain to the use of firearms in presentations/exhibits. The Iowa State Fair policy is no firearms (or other weapons) on the fairgrounds during the Iowa State Fair. We have asked about their use in exhibits and educational presentations, and the State Fair Patrol has consistently said "no means no." There is not an exception during the state fair for the 4-H building, no matter what security precautions we might offer. The member will need to modify his or her presentation to use a model or some other prop to substitute for the gun. We realize this is sometimes a little awkward for the 4-H'er but believe our members are resourceful and will make the best of the situation.

How can our club or county handle firearm ownership?

First, we share with our county offices that if possible to develop a partnership with a local sportsman's club and use their equipment if needed. This is happening in some counties.

If this is not possible, only buy a small inventory of starter equipment - air rifles (that don't require ATF forms), and shotguns and muzzleloaders (which do). After a youth shoots a few times, they are purchasing their own. A big inventory is not necessary. We do not have a pistol program, so this is not an issue.

If a county or club program feels they need to purchase firearms, the "owner" would need to be an official volunteer or, in some cases, the county director may be the "owner." Since the equipment officially will belong to a county club or an extension office, the county should develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) written between the county Extension office and the volunteer, clearly stating who owns the firearm. Some counties are purchasing a separate insurance policy on the firearms.

Where can I get more information on 4-H Shooting Sports?

Your local county extension office will have information about what is happening in your county. You can also check the website,

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/projects/ShootingSports/>

If you still have questions, contact Jacki Luckstead (luckstea@iastate.edu or 319-465-3224).

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