



Techniques for Teaching Youth

How are meetings going? Are you concerned you will run out of ideas or encounter some disruptive behavior problems? This article deals with teaching techniques and management styles. A wise teacher once observed, "If a child isn't interested, you can't teach him. If he is interested, you can't keep him from learning." Most 4-H leaders don't think of themselves as teachers. However, through volunteer leaders, 4-H members learn skills that help develop such lifelong characteristics as positive self-esteem and sound decision-making. Through you, they also practice effective communication skills, responsibility, and cooperation with others. 4-H leaders are successful teachers because they establish a personal relationship with each member. Learning takes place through the experiences and opportunities a 4-H member has.

Key Ideas

- The child-centered approach
- 100 ways to say "very good"
- Helping youngsters learn
- Teaching tools
- Leadership styles and how they affect your club
- Characteristics of a good leader
- What to do about kids who act up
- Okay, so the activity, ideas, or meeting bombed

The Child-Centered Approach

4-H uses a child-centered approach to learning. This means the program focuses on the needs and interests of youth. For example, 4-H club members set their goals for the year, make their plans to reach these goals, carry out their plans, and assess their progress.

You may be wondering, "What do they need me for?" Well, you play an important role. It's through your guidance, understanding, encouragement, and recognition that they will learn how to set a goal and reach it. You help each member set realistic goals. You provide encouragement when the going is rough. Best of all, you see that proud smile that says "I did it" when you recognize them for a job well done. Did you know that there are at least 100 ways to say "very good"? How many can you come up with?

100 Ways to Say "Very Good"

People thrive in a positive environment. Give family, friends, and 4-H members plenty of praise, warmth, and signs of affection. People need smiles and approval. Look for good behavior that you want to strengthen, then say "very good" to people in a variety of ways, but be specific. Some suggestions are listed on the following page.

I'm proud of the way you worked today.
 Now that's what I call a fine job!
 You're doing a good job.
 You did that very well.
 You've just about got it.
 You must have been practicing!
 That's the best you have ever done.
 FANTASTIC!
 Congratulations!
 You're really improving.
 I knew you could do it.
 Right on!
 That's quite an improvement.
 SUPERB! Now, you've figured it out
 Good remembering!
 You are doing that much better today.
 Keep it up!
 Now you have it.
 You did a lot of work today!
 Not bad.
 You've got that down pat!
 GREAT!
 You certainly did well today.
 You are learning fast.
 TREMENDOUS!
 Keep working on it, you're getting better.
 You're doing fine.
 Good for you!
 Good thinking!
 Couldn't have done it better myself.
 You are really learning a lot.

You make it look easy.
 Keep on trying!
 You really make my job fun.
 You out did yourself today!
 That's the right way to do it.
 I've never seen anyone do it better.
 One more time and you'll have it.
 Good for you!
 You're getting better every day
 Good going!
 You did it that time!
 I like that.
 That's not half bad!
 MARVELOUS!
 WOW!
 I'm very proud of you.
 That's the way!
 I think you've got it now.
 Nice going.
 You figured that out fast.
 Now you've figured it out.
 You remembered.
 SENSATIONAL!
 That's really nice.
 You haven't missed a thing.
 It's a pleasure to teach when you work like that.
 That's the way to do it.
 Keep up the good work.
 You're right!
 That's better.
 CLEVER!
 Nothing can stop you now!
 That makes me feel good.
 That's first class work.

That's great!
 EXCELLENT!
 That's it!
 PERFECT!
 Way to go.
 That's the best ever.
 Well, look at you go!
 You're really going to town.
 TERRIFIC!
 FINE!
 You've got it made.
 Way to go.
 That's RIGHT!
 Now you have the hang of it!
 You're on the right track now!
 Congratulations!
 You got it right.
 That's GOOD!
 You've got your brain in gear today.
 You are very good at that.
 Much better!
 That's coming along nicely.
 WONDERFUL!
 That's very much better!
 You've just about mastered that!
 GOOD WORK!
 That's better than ever.
 I'm happy to see you working like that.
 Nice going.
 OUTSTANDING!
 You're really working hard today.
 That's It!
 OK

The purpose of all feedback is to help young people maintain or improve their present level of effectiveness or appropriate behavior. So, deal in specifics. Add the specific behavior to these phrases to make them even more effective!

Helping Youngsters Learn

As a leader you encourage the natural curiosity that youngsters have. You provide opportunities for "hands-on" learning and help members grow in self-confidence as they learn. Together, you and your 4-H members will have fun learning. Because each age group has different characteristics and unique developmental needs, it helps to know what they are.

These will have an impact on how different members learn. Ask your county staff of Iowa State University Extension for information about developmental differences of boys and girls at various ages, or look under "Youth Development" at <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/4H/restrict/BLresources.html>

4-H experiences are implemented through using the Experiential Learning Model. To learn how to use the model, check this website: <http://www.fourh.umn.edu/resources/experiential.pdf>

Teaching Tools

There is a wealth of resources at your fingertips. The challenge is discovering them. Resources can be people, reading material, methods of teaching, or activities. Here are examples of teaching methods and resources to help 4-H members learn:

lectures	charts	judging
videos	4-H project materials	4-H record books
workshops	rosters	show and tell
slides	games	parents
leader training	posters	camp
clinics	puzzles	club officers
club exchanges	guest speakers	movies
tours	contests	library
field trips	fairs	ISUE check out kits
discussions	presentations	leader guides
	county Extension office	

A great source of teaching tools is the 4-H leader guide for the project. Check with your county 4-H staff for visual aids or resource kits that might be available for you to borrow. Also, check with other leaders to see what they have used or know about. Plan ahead—these resources may be in high demand.

Leadership Styles and How They Affect Your Club

What you do, and the results you get, depends a great deal on how you and your members relate in the club. In the following pictures, the light figures represent the members and the shaded figure is the leader. Which of the relationship styles would you like in a 4-H club?

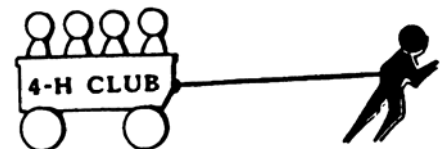
1. Us-and-our club. The leader knows the individual members well and is interested in them and in what they do. The club belongs to all the youth, and the club will be most successful when it exists for the members' benefit. The leader says, "Let's go," "Let's find out," "How shall we best do this?" The leader takes an active part in club affairs but does not control them.



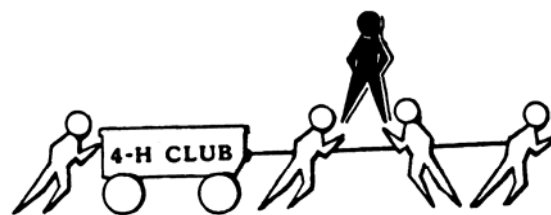
2. Leader-alongside club. The leader moves along beside the club and with it. The leader watches the progress, offers suggestions, and actively helps do the work. The leader is genuinely interested and enjoys being a leader, but does not have a feeling of owning the club. He or she sees that the job is done.



3. Leader-out-in-front club. The leader is out in front and draws the club behind. Soon the leader speaks of "my club," which may make it appear to others that the club belongs to the leader. Programs may be planned, but they only reflect the leader's wishes.



4. Hands-off club. The leader sits back, makes no decisions for the group, and forces the group and the individuals to chart their own course. Good as well as bad decisions, plans, and programs are permitted to develop. Strong clubs get stronger under this type of leadership. Weak clubs may fall apart.



5. Which relationship is right? No one relationship is the "right" one. In fact, depending on the situation each one could be "right." The trick is to find the one that works best for you and the kids in your group. You'll probably find yourself most comfortable and the members happiest in one of the four types of relationships. However, as interests and experience change, so does the relationship.



For example, in a new club starting with young members, you would probably be most effective "pushing or pulling" the club along.

Would this still be the "right" relationship after the members and club have had a year or two of experience?

Characteristics of a Good Leader

A good leader has many characteristics - some may work better for you than others.

These characteristics relate to the way you handle your group of youth (your "facilitating style"). You may recognize some of your own qualities under "facilitating" style, and hopefully not too many under "not-so-facilitating!"

"Facilitating" style – works well in most situations

- Guides a group through an experience
- Uses different leadership styles when appropriate
- Encourages participation
- Keeps action going
- Can tolerate low points in action
- Is flexible
- Encourages participation by all
- Is generally low key
- Is a good listener
- Cares

"Non-facilitating" style

- Takes over leadership and directs others
- Makes decisions for the group
- Ignores suggestions
- Lack of preparation
- Evades issues
- Gives solutions rather than letting group come to their own
- More concerned with results than the people involved
- Unconcerned
- Uncomfortable to be around

What to do About Kids Who Act Up?

Sometimes kids do act obnoxious...admit it...don't feel guilty. The important thing to remember is that *the action is obnoxious, not the person!* It's a very important distinction. **The behavior is not okay, the youth is.**

Young people virtually never act up for the sheer pleasure of it. Youth usually have a reason for what they do. Chances are, a member acting up has a problem, and if you're perceptive (and patient), you might be able to discover the problem and help solve it. Stop a minute before you let yourself get upset and ask yourself, "Why is he or she doing that?"

Some common reasons why people act up

1. They want attention. If they disrupt a meeting, they get not only your attention, but attention from other members as well. How about giving the member some responsibilities during the meeting? That way, she/he gets needed attention in a positive way.
2. They might be uncomfortable in the situation. Maybe they don't know what's expected, or your group is doing something they have never done before. By acting up, the uncomfortable person doesn't have to figure out what is expected. A few quiet words to explain what to do will probably do the trick. If it doesn't work, a quiet talk while others are occupied might clear the air.
3. They may be afraid of failure. Closely related to number two above is acting up because of fear of failure. If a person feels they can't do what is expected, it may be less embarrassing to be called a "troublemaker" than to be called a "failure."
4. They don't like what the group is doing. The activity or project may be too easy or too difficult. It's probably necessary to sit down, one-on-one, and help this member set some goals that he/she would really like to reach.
5. It's possible you have no idea why a particular member is acting up. The quickest way to find out is ... ask the member. For example, "Bob, from the kinds of things you have been doing, I suspect something is bothering you. I would like to work it out with you. How do you feel about it?" Maybe kid doesn't know either?

Okay...So the Activity, Ideas, or Meeting Bombed!

Don't be down in the mouth. It won't be the end of the world...as long as you figure out what went wrong and work to correct it.

Maybe the members just weren't interested in what you did. Why?

They don't care about the activity.

They don't fit in.

They don't feel the activity accomplishes anything.

There could be other reasons. How can you find out? Ask the *members!* Does that sound simple? It is! No leader can have all the answers and insights into what young people want, so ask them. Your respect for their opinions and needs will make them feel you really care. You'll probably be surprised at the results of this positive communication. Just sit down with your members, either individually or as a group, and find out what they wish to accomplish. (Goal setting...remember?)

Hang in there! Try some of these suggestions--and then try some of your own ideas! You and your club members will enjoy working together in 4-H!

Enjoy the successes with your club. Build on your strengths, and celebrate the good things regularly!

Action Steps

- ◆ Ask your members for ideas on activities and topics that they would like.
- ◆ Find a resource for learning more about age and developmental stages of youth.
- ◆ Experiment with different activities and teaching styles.
- ◆ Attend training sessions for the project.
- ◆ Ask other volunteers how they teach the project.
- ◆ Ask your county 4-H staff for references you could read.
- ◆ Let older members teach younger members.
- ◆ Try a game for teaching project-related facts.

How can I use the information in this letter:

1. New activities to plan into our club program:

2. Other people who could help us and how they might help:

3. Questions to ask ISU Extension staff and other leaders:

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... and justice for all

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