

RECORD KEEPING OVERVIEW

Iowa 4-H Record Keeping Philosophy, Steps, and Formats

PHILOSOPHY FOR 4-H RECORD KEEPING

The purpose of 4-H record keeping is to teach how to keep records, which is an important life skill. Record keeping is an ongoing process that does not end when the 4-H year ends. Youth are encouraged to select a format and process that meets their needs and their learning style.

OBJECTIVES FOR 4-H RECORD KEEPING

- To learn how to set goals, make action plans, and determine how well you did.
- To learn the skills of record keeping such as organization, planning, and decision-making.
- To learn to communicate and summarize.
- To learn responsibility by completing a task.
- To evaluate information that will market personal skills through future resumes and applications.



GUIDELINES FOR 4-H RECORD KEEPING

All 4-H members are encouraged to develop a record keeping system that includes:

- Record keeping for one or more project areas.
- Summary information of their participation in 4-H experiences.
- Yearly self-evaluation and/or a member-mentor conference.

In 4-H, using a record keeping system is a recommended practice for youth in grades 4-12 to track participation, goals, achievements, and reflections throughout your 4-H journey. This record keeping system can be referred to when writing award applications, resumes, scholarship applications, or preparing for meetings or speeches. A record keeping system can help you clearly communicate and share your learning experiences.

While record keeping systems are generally not required for participation in 4-H activities, events, club officer or in other leadership roles, we encourage you to make record keeping a part of your 4-H experience. Many former 4-H members cherish their record books as adults for the memories they hold, the achievements they preserve, and for the life skills they helped develop.

Record keeping systems might be requested as a part of your county awards process. Record keeping systems are one way you might be asked to show evidence of your learning, goal setting, reflection, and growth in project area learning, leadership, civic engagement, or communication to meet award criteria.





FIVE STEPS OF RECORD KEEPING

STEP ONE: DETERMINE YOUR INTERESTS.

This step occurs at the beginning of the 4-H year when you select your project areas. You can use the 4-H project area guides: <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/15266> to help you determine your interests. What things do you find interesting? What 4-H project areas do you want to learn more about? What new things would you like to learn and accomplish in 4-H this year?

STEP TWO: SET YOUR GOALS

Setting goals is simply deciding what you want to learn and do. Having goals is like a road map; a tool that helps you plan how to get to where you want to go. Keep track of your goals by using your record keeping system. You can learn more by reading 4H 5511 Goal Setting—Writing Project Area and Exhibit Goals: <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/16191>.

At the beginning of the year, determine your goals for the project areas in which you enrolled. Record them in the record keeping system you have selected.



STEP THREE: FORM AN ACTION PLAN



Now you have a goal to work toward! Your goals will not be achieved without hard work and planning. If you set a goal such as: “I will learn how to make a pie by July 1.” You might ask yourself:

1. Where will you get the information you need to learn how to make a pie?
2. What types of pie might you learn how to make?
3. Which recipe will you select for the pie crust?

Now, look at the goals you have made for your year. List the steps you will need to take to complete your goal in order. Plan time needed to complete each step. You can use the monthly 4-H Goal Calendar, 4H 5001, <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/16174>, to help you plan when you will do each step.

STEP FOUR: WORK YOUR PLAN!

As the year goes along, record what you do and learn in your project areas. Include what worked well, what did not work, and what you enjoyed most. Pictures, clippings, project area worksheets, exhibit write-ups, and other items can be included to help tell what you have done. Be creative and have fun.



STEP FIVE: EVALUATE AND MAKE FUTURE PLANS



As you complete each project goal, it is time to evaluate it. Take time to look back and see what you did, what you have learned, and how you feel about it. Sometimes goals change during the year. It's okay to include this in your record keeping process. Explain and reflect on why your plans changed, and how you learned to adapt. Start now to set new goals for next year.

You are encouraged to reflect on your total 4-H experience in a yearly summary, a 4-H story, or by completing a self evaluation activity.

YEARLY SUMMARY

You can use the Yearly Member Summary 4H 5011, <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/149>, to record the most important things you do in 4-H throughout the year. You can see how you have grown over time by doing more and different things.

4-H STORY

Another way to evaluate your 4-H experience is to write or record a 4-H story. Introduce yourself and explain what you did and learned in each project area. Tell how your participation in 4-H contributed to your personal growth, self-esteem, new learning, skills, future career plans, and concern for others. Explain what you will do next year.



SELF-EVALUATION

At the end of the year, you can use the 4H 5012 Yearly Self-Evaluation, <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/155>, as a guide to evaluating the 4-H record keeping system you chose to use. Consider talking about your year with a leader, another 4-H member, a parent, or another caring adult. Discussing your yearly self-evaluation with them give you a new perspective on your 4-H work.



FORMATS FOR RECORD KEEPING

Iowa 4-H offers a selection of record keeping forms that members may use to guide their record keeping process. Record keeping forms are a suggested format and are not required. Members are encouraged to select a format that fits their personal needs and their learning style. However, record keeping forms may be encouraged by clubs and counties as a guide for learning record keeping skills, or for award application processes. It's recommended that award processes allow for a wide variety of record keeping formats and methods to be used by 4-H members. You will want to check the award application requirements for your local program.

The record keeping format selected should reflect a 4-H member's goals, accomplishments, and plans. You can try different methods of record keeping. Some people like to keep track of information on a computer or spreadsheet. Others may want to keep track in a notebook or on a record keeping form. Let's explore some of the formats you could use for your record keeping system.

4-H JOURNAL OR PLANNER

You may use a journal or planner to keep track of your project area and exhibit goals for the year. What tasks will you want to do each month? Find a place in your planner to do some of these tasks each month. Here are some suggestions for a monthly record keeping timeline.

- **September-January:** Evaluate your past year, enroll in new 4-H project areas, set your project area and exhibit goals. You can use 4H 5511 Goal Setting—Writing Project Area and Exhibit Goals (<https://store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/16191>) to guide you.
- **February-March:** Track your progress each month, do you need to adjust any of your goals?
- **April-August:** Record your project area learning, participation, and achievements. Include information on your exhibit goals and achievements as well.
- **August-September:** Decide if you'd like to use any record keeping worksheets to organize the notes you made in your journal. Reflect on your goals and your successes. Talk to your leader, parent, or other caring adult about your progress. Keep your record keeping journal in a safe place, and make sure it has the year noted on the book for your own reference.

VIDEO AND AUDIO OPTIONS

You can choose from a variety of video options to share what you learned in 4-H. Here are some tips for creating a video or audio record book. Choose a quiet place away from noise, like the telephone, TV, radio, and outside traffic. If you are using video, consider a background that is simple and not too dark.

You can plan your presentation before recording by using your record keeping papers or journals as a guide. Consider covering information such as what you wanted to do, what you did, who helped you, and when and how you completed your work. Tell the audience about your favorite part of the experience. Use full sentences and good grammar. It may help to write the information out like a script.

You may want to practice before recording. Then practice a 1-2-minute recording and check the lighting and sound before recording your full script. You could try the following variations if you wish.

- Consider asking a family member or 4-H member to interview you about your project area.
- Record short segments throughout the year as you work toward your goals.
- Consider including actual work with or interaction with others.

Watch your recording as though you have never heard of your project before. Does it make sense? Is the story complete? Does it tell everything in a logical, organized way?

Consider keeping a backup of your video or audio record keeping. You will want to name your files with descriptive titles including the topic and year so that you can easily find the information you need in the future.

PORTFOLIO OPTIONS

A portfolio is a collection of some of your 4-H work. The purpose of the collection is to illustrate the knowledge you have learned and the skills you have developed because you took part in 4-H. You can use a variety of formats to collect and showcase your portfolio. You can use a box, a scrapbook, a folio, or a printed picture book like those you can create and order online.

The portfolio contains things that you collect throughout the project year. It is a way to communicate. A portfolio allows you to tell a story of your journey becoming a thoughtful, knowledgeable, flexible, productive 4-H member.

What should your portfolio include? It's up to you! You should include whatever will best tell your 4-H story. Items may be a work in progress or completed work. Items may be organized in order of completion. By collecting items and noting the date they were made, the portfolio will show the changes that occur as your 4-H experience unfolds. Here are some ideas of what you could include in your portfolio:

- Written goals
- Photos
- Drawings
- Planning notes
- Samples of your work
- Financial records
- Reflections or thoughts about a project
- Newspaper clippings
- Photos

A portfolio can have many looks. There is no one kind of container or appearance that is right for all portfolios. The portfolio's size and shape should be determined by the purpose and goals of the portfolio, type of portfolio, and your needs as a 4-H member. Choose a container that will be manageable, big enough for all your materials, and transportable. Possible options for the portfolio container:

- Handmade paper booklet
- Binder
- Commercial file folders or accordion folders
- Cardboard boxes, wire baskets, plastic bins
- Envelopes

It's recommended to include a summary, like the 4H 5011 Yearly Member Summary, <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/149>, if your portfolio is large. This will help you and others know what is included and find information as needed.