A New Member Guide to 4-H

Make Friends Have FUN!

Extension programs are available to all without regard to race, color national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability.

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Welcome To 4-H!

We are excited to welcome you as a new member in the world’s largest youth organization—4-H! We invite you to join us in making new friends and having fun!

Like any new adventure, there are always many questions. We hope this guide helps answer some of your questions and directs you along the way.

4-H is a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills.

The 4-H Pledge

I pledge my HEAD to clearer thinking,
My HEART to greater loyalty,
My HANDS to larger service,
My HEALTH to better living,
For my club, my community, my country & my world.

4-H Motto
To Make the Best Better!

4-H Colors
Green — Symbolizes life, springtime, & youth
White — Symbolizes purity

4-H Notes.....
Welcome / Contact Information

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My 4-H Club Information

My 4-H Club Name ____________________________
My 4-H Co-Leader’s Name ____________________________
My 4-H Co-Leader’s Phone Number ____________________________
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My 4-H Co-Leader’s Phone Number ____________________________

The Extension Office Team

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Websites to Visit:
www.extension.iastate.edu/4-H
www.extension.iastate.edu/howard
Member Information

What Happens When You Enroll in 4-H?

1. Youth select at least one project (interest) area in which to enroll and receive project literature to help individual learning. The literature suggests activity ideas as well as exhibit ideas for fair.

2. Youth and their families select a 4-H club in the county to join.

3. After enrolling in a club, a 4-H member (and family) attends monthly club meetings. At these meetings, members plan club events, vote on items, swap ideas and information and do fun and educational activities.

Beyond local club participation, 4-H families can participate in a variety of county sponsored events, such as project workshops, camps, county fair and more!

A 4-H newsletter is mailed each month to alert families of upcoming events.  

Be sure to read it!

What’s Expected of You?

Most county 4-H programs have basic expectations of members, such as:

1. Attend club meetings.
2. Do an educational presentation at your club meeting.
3. Participate in a community service project.
4. Record what you’ve done and learned throughout the year. Keeping records of project work throughout the year is strongly encouraged. Forms are available in the county office or online through the state 4-H webpage.

Exhibiting at the county fair is a highlight of the year for many 4-H members. Youth are encouraged, but not required, to showcase project work at the county fair.

Do you have more questions? Be sure to check with the Extension Office. The staff are there to answer your questions!

How Can Families Help?

The 4-H program encourages parents, grandparents, guardians, and family members to help the 4-Her with his/her projects. Here are some suggestions:

- Help youth select projects that relate to their interests/hobbies.
- Attend club meetings with your child.
- Give encouragement and supervision, but allow the 4-Her to do their own work.
- Help youth develop a record keeping system for their project work. (This may mean finding a special place for records and 4-H materials in the home and reviewing that information periodically with them.)
- Read the 4-H Newsletter and help them stay on top of dates, deadlines, rules, etc….
- Be willing to help whenever possible for the club as extra adult hands, hostess, driver, chaperone, etc. as the need arises.
- Be positive. Praise them when they succeed & be there to help when they struggle.
- Seek help from Extension Staff, Club Leaders, fellow 4-Hers, as well as people with specific expertise in project areas.

HAVE FUN!

Did You Know?

There are 3 Levels in 4-H.

Grades 4-6 are considered Junior Level 4-Hers
Grades 7-8 are considered Intermediate Level 4-Hers
Grades 9-12 are considered Senior Level 4-Hers
Early school teachers O. H. Benson in Wright County, and Jessie Field Shambaugh in Page County, taught farm topics in schools. Both became superintendents in their counties in 1906 and vigorously promoted "club" work.

County Superintendent Cap E. Miller in Keokuk County, Iowa, also pioneered. In 1904 he urged his teachers to promote clubs and teach farm subjects. He sponsored a county organization of boys and girls with officers and educational programs. Miller's plans fostered many of the teaching tools in today's 4-H program including life skills and learning-by-doing through projects, group meetings, and exhibits. Community service projects also provide active learning interaction of youth and adults and encourage youth to set and accomplish goals.

The emblem of the four-Leaf clover started in 1906 at a one-room country school near Clarion, Iowa. O.H. Benson observed 11 pupils looking for four-Leaf clovers. He used the four Leaves to stand for the school's 4-square Development of: Education, Physical, Moral, Fellowship. The three-leaf clover was used in 1906-1911 to stand for head, heart and hand. The fourth "H" for health was added in 1911.

County Extension staffing patterns established between 1914 and 1919 increased the growth and effectiveness of volunteer leadership. The programs gradually became part of the Extension service and not the public school system.

The Iowa 4-H program remains under the direction of Iowa State University Extension.

What Does a 4-H Club Do?

- Most clubs meet monthly with a year-long plan for their programs.
- Each meeting usually includes presentations by members.
- A 4-H club elects its own officers and conducts its own business.
- Meetings might also include presentations by leaders, parents, or a resource person, recreation/games, a family night, or a field trip.
- Most 4-H clubs do a variety of community service projects. Members should decide the types of projects their club will do.

What Happens at a 4-H Club Meeting?

Here are some things that might happen at a 4-H meeting:

- Games or fun activities.
- Call the meeting to order.
- The 4-H pledge and the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Roll call and minutes of the last meeting.
- Treasurer report.
- Committees tell what they've planned or done.
- "Old business" or things talked about before.
- "New business" or new ideas, activities, and plans.
- Adjourn the business meeting.
- Educational Presentations are given.
- Refreshments and fun!

Did You Know?

A 4-H club usually elects the following officers:

- **President**—conducts meetings and appoints committees.
- **Vice President**—is in charge of the program plans.
- **Secretary**—keeps minutes and attendance records.
- **Treasurer**—pays club bills and deposits funds received.
- **Recreation leader**—helps plan parties and leads games.
- **Reporter**—writes newspaper stories about club events.
- **Historian**—keeps a lasting record of the club's yearly story.
4-H Vocabulary

Every organization has a vocabulary that seems familiar only to its members and 4-H is no different. Here are a few of those words:

Projects—A 4-H project is an area of emphasis in which a 4-Her enrolls, studies, learns, and keeps records. A “Pick-A-Project” paper lists all of the project areas in 4-H from A to Z.

Exhibits—A 4-H exhibit is an item resulting from project work that the 4-Her has chosen to bring to fair and have evaluated by a judge. For example: a 4-Her may enroll in the woodworking project area and choose to bring a birdhouse to the fair that he/she constructed.

Static Exhibits—This term is used to refer to non-animal exhibits displayed in the 4-H Exhibits Building.

Communications—Educational Presentations are talks or demonstrations given in front of an audience about some topic that interests the 4-Her. Working Exhibits are less formal. They involve a one-on-one type of demonstration technique. Share-the-Fun includes entertainment acts, like music, dance, interpretive speech or skits. They can involve any number of youth - from one 4-Her to the whole club.

Conference Judging—This method of judging is used for static exhibits at the fair. A 4-Her discusses their work with the judge. The judge determines the ribbon placing and the item is put on display during the fair.

Enrollment Forms—This form is what provides the Extension Office with your membership information. It includes your name, address, phone, and project areas you have selected for the year.

Code of Ethics Forms—This form asks members to be responsible for doing their own project work in an ethical manner. This form was completed at enrollment time and is on file.

Medical History Forms—Much like the information provided to schools and other youth-serving organizations, 4-H needs medical information in case of an emergency with a member. All information is kept confidential.

Identification (ID) Forms—All animals that are part of a 4-H project must be identified. Market animals will have ID forms completed at their respective weigh-ins. Other animals have separate ID sheets and will be identified under your youth 4-H Online record.

Entry Forms—These forms are what the 4-Her completes to enter specific exhibits into competition at the county, district, state, and interstate levels. Each contest has a rulebook and entry deadlines.

Spring Fair—The Clothing and Communications event held in April or May.

Clover Connection—The monthly newsletter mailed at the end of the month. Be sure to read for important information.

4-H Calendar Year

The following is a year-long list of activities that take place in a typical 4-H year. Counties don’t always do the same activities at the same time every year, and some activities are dropped while others are added. Be sure to read your 4-H newsletter for more details, deadlines, and additional information on camps, workshops and events.

January
- Junior 4-H Night
- State 4-H recognition and scholarship applications become available for high school aged 4-H members
- Time to Set Project Goals

February
- Recognition & Scholarship Applications due Feb. 1
- Market Swine Weigh-In & Facility weigh in
- 4-H Day at the Legislature
- Citizenship Group Trip
- Spring Leader Meeting
- State Awards Interviews

March
- Intermediate 4-H Night
- Market Sheep Weigh-in
- 4-H Spring Fair
- Dog Obedience Classes Start

April
- Intermediate 4-H Night
- Market Sheep Weigh-in
- 4-H Spring Fair
- Dog Obedience Classes Start

May
- Livestock IDs due May 15
- Horse Workouts Begin
- Youth for Quality Care of Animals (YQCA) Training

June
- County Fair Entries Due
- Summer 4-H Camps
- State 4-H Recognition Day
- Area 4-H Leadership Conference
- 4-H State Fair
- 4-H Recognition Night
- Junior 4-H Night
- 4-H College Day
- County 4-H Fair
- State 4-H Awards Program
- Complete your 4-H Enrollment Form!!

July
- State Fair Livestock entries due July 1
- National 4-H Week
- 4-H Week Event
- Recruit New Members!

August
- 4-H Record Books Due Sept 1!
- 4-H Awards Program
- Complete your Records!!

September
- 4-H Camp at Pinebluff in Decorah
- 4-H Youth Conference & Animal Science ROUND-UP & CSI: Crops in Ames
- Mighty Howard County Fair!
- Share Spring Fair Exhibits at County Fair
- Fall Leader Meeting

October
- 4-H Awards Program
- Complete your 4-H Enrollment form!

November
- 4-H Record Books Due Nov 1
- 4-H Awards Program
- 4-H Beef-Lean In