



Planning and Facilitating 4-H Club Experiences

By now you may have questions about planning and conducting your 4-H club meetings. This article includes information about the basic, everyday ingredients of a successful 4-H meeting.

Key Ideas

- Setting goals with your 4-H club
- Planning a yearly 4-H club calendar
- Club officers and committees
- Teaching the 4-H pledge, motto, and symbols
- Members learn from meetings
- Possible agenda items for a 4-H club meeting
- Involving parents with your club
- Tours, activity days, etc.

Setting Goals with Your 4-H Club

It's helpful for you and your 4-H members, to set a few basic goals for your club's first year. (Not too many, or you may get discouraged!)

Encourage 4-H'ers to set personal goals. You will want to do this for yourself also. You've heard the saying, "How do you know if you've gotten there if you don't know where you're going?"

Planning a Yearly 4-H Club Calendar

As soon as goals have been selected by your club, it is really helpful to plan a yearly calendar of activities. Be sure to involve your 4-H members and their parents in developing this plan. Many counties have a form for listing all of your meetings and activities. Be sure to include meeting time and date, who will be host or hostess, who will give a presentation and other program content.

Have each member use a calendar to write in the information from your planning session. This calendar also can be used as the club's plan is developed, writing in notes on the dates for time, place, and other specifics. Members can take their calendar home, and this helps parents plan, too. Another way is to make a list of dates and significant specifics for each member to take home and post.

Ask your ISU Extension county staff what your county 4-H calendar includes, especially the dates of events, contests, fairs, etc. designed primarily for your 4-H members. Most counties have a 4-H newsletter listing all activities. Be sure you are on the mailing list, and then share this information with your members.

Club Officers and Committees

Not all clubs may have officers, but if you do, the suggested 4-H club officers are:

- President
- Vice president
- Secretary
- Treasurer (if needed)
- Club reporter (for publicity reports)

Other possible officers or committees are historian, telephone committee, photographer, field trip committee, recreation committee, clean-up committee, etc. There are instruction materials for presidents, vice-presidents, secretaries, club reporters and historians at your county Extension office. Ask for 4-H 71-A through 71-H. Be sure the secretary and treasurer each have an *Iowa 4-H Secretary's Record* (4-H 20-Rev.) or *Iowa 4-H Treasurer's Record* (4-H 21-Rev.). Your county Extension staff may have other materials available also.

Many leaders like to give each member a chance to be an officer or a committee chairperson. The officers and committee chairpersons then become a planning committee to develop the yearly calendar of activities for your club.

Teaching the 4-H Pledge, Motto, and Symbols

It helps members and adults to better understand 4-H if the leader or a member presents the 4-H pledge, motto, and symbols to the group early in the club year.

The leader may find it helpful to make a poster to use at each meeting, showing the 4-H pledge and the 4-H motto, so members can read it while memorizing it. After the first meeting, members can take turns leading the flag salute and the 4-H pledge. They may also want to give a short talk on the meaning of the 4-H symbols. Small 4-H flag sets for clubs can be purchased from *National 4-H Supply Catalog*.

Members Learn from Meetings

Well-planned meetings give members an opportunity to:

1. Feel they **belong**
2. Acquire new knowledge and **master** skills
3. Enjoy **recreational** activities
4. Develop **independence** through participation in decision making and leadership
5. Develop a sense of **generosity** through planning and performing community service

Members conduct the meeting but need your guidance in advance. Arrange time to meet with them so they are prepared and can assume complete responsibility.

Possible Agenda Items for a 4-H Club Meeting

Following is an example agenda for a 4-H club meeting.

1. *Someone to greet each member by name as they arrive* (**belonging**)
 - Learning to meet new people
 - Caring about other people
2. *Opening fun activity*
 - Creating ease & acceptance
 - Considering needs of all
3. *Fun roll call or learning roll call*
 - Encourages everyone to share
4. *Business meeting* (**independence**)
 - Call to order
 - Pledges
 - Minutes of last meeting
 - Unfinished business
 - New business

Establish some rules of order for your business meeting. Many leaders help youth learn parliamentary procedure.
5. *Provide an opportunity for youth to make decisions* (**independence** and **generosity**)
 - Help plan club program, outings, and community service projects
6. *Learning by doing activities* (**mastery**)
 - Project work, learning a new skill
7. *Provide opportunity to share learning* (**belonging**)
 - Could include demonstrations and communication activities
8. *Planned recreation* (**belonging**)
 - Helps youth get to know each other and interact
9. *Celebration*
 - We had fun, learned something
 - Develop a better self-concept

(Meeting includes activities designed to involve members in youth-to-youth and youth-to-adult interaction.)

There are endless variations of this agenda—and variety certainly helps to make the meeting more interesting and lively. Check the 4-H volunteer website for ideas on games and recreation. (<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4H/Volunteers/Documents/Games.PDF>).

Some clubs choose to have short, informal business sessions at some point during a 4-H meeting. You might consider trying out a variety of methods to determine which works best with your age group, the size of your club, and the project areas in which your members are enrolled.

Involving Parents with the Club

Successful 4-H membership usually includes a great deal of parental support. A key reason for becoming a leader is because a son or daughter wants to join 4-H. It is logical to encourage other parents to be co-leaders, assistant leaders, resource leaders, or special teachers. Don't hesitate to ask for help! Be specific about what and when you need help. Then ask!

Parents may be asked to chaperone club activities, host a meeting, teach a special skill, or share a particular interest. If they are sharing information with the club, it doesn't necessarily have to be related to a project. It could be regarding citizenship, leadership, community service, or other topics.

Tours, Activity Days, etc.

Your club members will really enjoy a variety of field trips, tours, and special activity days. Sometimes you teach them more in a well-planned field trip than in a regular club meeting. These events should be included in your total number of meetings. An excellent source for ideas on where to take your club on a tour is to ask other 4-H leaders. Your 4-H members will enjoy doing some of the planning for a field trip, and may even want to invite another club to join them for the trip.

A special activity day is another excellent teaching tool. Perhaps you can invite a parent, a resource leader, or a friend with a special skill to teach it at one of your regular meetings.

If you have further questions or concerns, do contact your ISU Extension county staff or another volunteer leader. We all want to help you succeed.

Have a good meeting!

Action Steps

- ◆ With the other 4-H leaders, work with club members to set goals for your club.
- ◆ Encourage 4-H members to set personal goals.
- ◆ Set some goals for yourself for the coming year.
- ◆ With the other 4-H leaders, work with club members to plan a yearly 4-H club calendar.
- ◆ Help members select officers if needed.
- ◆ If your club decides to have a treasury, contact the county Extension staff for guidelines, policies, and ideas for fundraising activities.
- ◆ Allow youth to learn the 4-H pledge and 4-H motto in many ways.
- ◆ Meet with the club officers to help them plan the meeting agenda.
- ◆ Decide on what support you would like from parents. Choose ways to involve them in various meetings and activities.
- ◆ With the members and other leaders/parents, plan some interesting tours and activity days.

Reference materials

Some of these materials may be on the Iowa 4-H website at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4H/>
Iowa 4-H Secretary's Record (4-H 20-Rev.)
Iowa 4-H Treasurer's Record (4-H 21-Rev.)
So You are President of Your Group (4-H 71-A)
So You are Vice President of Your Group (4-H 71-B)
So You are Secretary of Your Group (4-H 71-C)
So You are Treasurer of Your Group (4-H 71-D)
So You are Historian of Your Group (4-H 71-E)
So You are News Reporter of Your Group (4-H 71-F)
So You are Recreation Leader of Your Group (4-H 71-G)
So You are Photographer of Your Group (4-H 71-H)
Meeting the Needs of Youth – Tips for 4-H Leaders (4-H 117)
National 4-H Supply Catalog website at <http://www.4-hmall.org>

How can I use this information:

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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