

4-H Youth Development

Achieving Goals through 4-H Record Keeping

Why should I do it? How will it help me? These are questions that 4-H'ers often ask. Record keeping is a process that can be used throughout life in many ways.

4-H'ers can learn the following.

- How to set goals
- To plan and do things to meet their goal(s)
- To collect and organize information
- To accept and complete responsibility
- To tell about what they liked to do and learned

4-H'ers are encouraged to select one or more of the following options for record keeping on project(s).

- *Basic Project Record* 4H-96A
- *Experienced Project Record* 4H-96B
- *Advanced Project Record* 4H-96C

- Project worksheets/manuals, such as livestock, food and nutrition, and others

- *Video Tape* 4H-97A

- *Audio Tape* 4H-97A

- *Portfolio* 4H-97B

- Computerized formats

- Create your own record keeping system

4-H'ers can follow five steps for record keeping.

1. Determine your interests.
2. Set your goals.
3. Form an action plan.
4. Do it!
5. Evaluate and make future plans.

Step 1. Determine your interests.

This step occurs at the beginning of the 4-H year when you select your projects. The *4-H Pick a Project* paper, 4H-200, outlines some activities that can help you determine your interests. Then select those projects in which you want to enroll. Think about questions like:

- What things do you find interesting?
- If you were in 4-H last year, what did you enjoy about the 4-H projects?
- What new things would you like to learn and do?

Your 4-H leader and parents can help you make these decisions.

Now is the time to start keeping track of the decisions you have made.

Talk to your 4-H leader about the different ways there are to do this. Refer to the options for record keeping on this page.

You can use a 4-H project record form to write down what you want to learn, or record your ideas on an audio tape, video tape, or computer if you have one available.

Be creative. Use the method that you enjoy most. If you have more than one project, you might like to try different methods of record keeping. It is okay if you change your ideas and plans during the year.

Ask your leader for the resources that are available, such as:

- *4-H Record Keeping* 4H-95
- *Project Record Forms—Basic, Experienced, Advanced* (4H-96A, 4H-96B, 4H-96C)
- *Using Audio or Video Tapes for 4-H Project Record Keeping* 4H-97A
- *4-H Portfolio Guidelines* 4H-97B

Ask your leader or the extension office for worksheets to help you practice writing goals. *4-H Goal Writing Worksheet, VI-2025A-sas*

If you are not certain that you can carry out a goal easily, you can give it a “control test.”

- √ Do you have control over all three parts of the goal?
- √ Does the action part of your goal tell what you will do?
- √ Do you have control over the result of your goal?

You have control over a goal such as “I will learn to put in a hand sewn hem by February 1.” However, if the result mentioned in the goal is what someone else will do, the goal does not pass the control test. The goal statement, “I will exhibit a champion steer at the county fair,” does not pass the control test because the beef judge determines the result that decides which steer will be the champion.

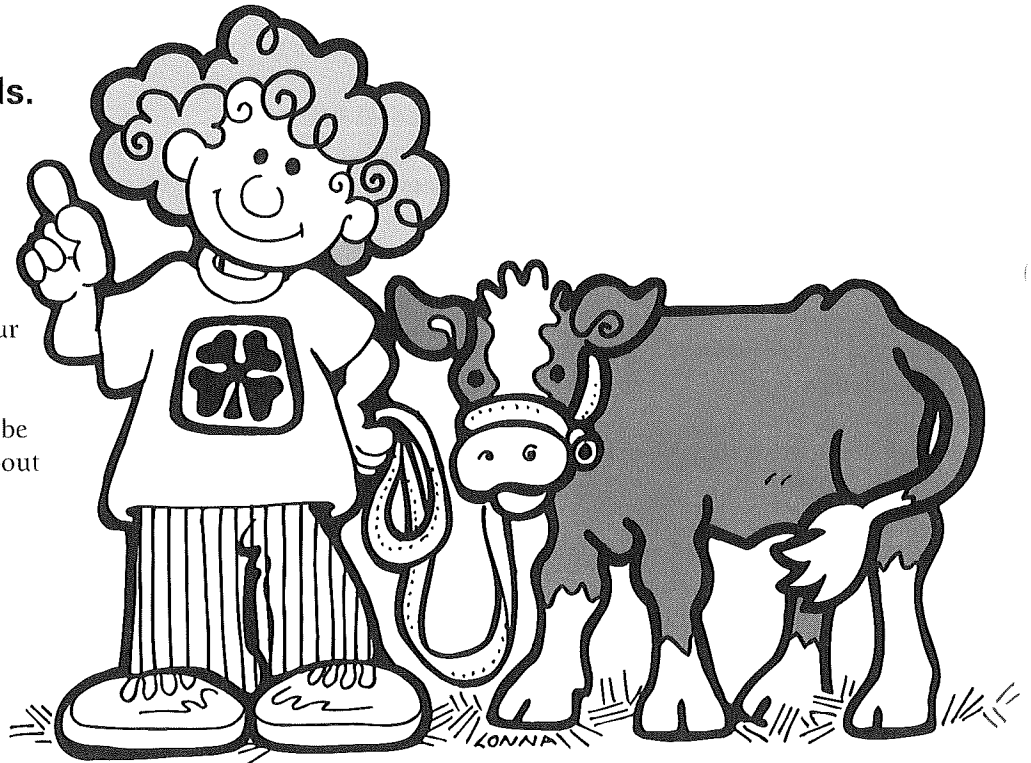
At the beginning of the year, determine your goals for the project(s) in which you enrolled. Record them in the record keeping format you have selected.

Step 2. Set your goals.

Setting goals is simply deciding what you want to learn and do. Having goals is like a road map. It is 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.

Goals have three parts that can be measured or checked. Think about the three parts of a measurable goal:

- a. **the action:** *how* you are going to do it;
- b. **the result:** *what* you will do;
- c. **the timetable:** *when* you plan to have it done.



This sample goal shows each part of a measurable goal.

the **action** *how* I want to train
 the **result** *what* my 4-H beef heifer to lead
 the **timetable** *when* before county fair time.



Don't worry about recording information for every section of the project worksheets if the questions do not match your goals.

It is up to you whether you do your record keeping once a month or immediately upon accomplishing a goal. Find the way best for you!

Step 5. 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. It's time to see if you have met the goal(s) you set at the beginning of your project.

As you evaluate, think about these questions:

- √ Were you able to accomplish your goal(s)?
- √ What changes did you make on your project as you went along?
- √ Is there anything about your project that you would change?
- √ How do you feel about what you have learned?
- √ What ideas would you like to build on for next year?

Step 3. Form an action plan.

Now you have a goal to work toward. It won't just happen. **You** have to make it happen! For example, if you have a goal to learn how to make a pie by July 1, think about these questions:

- √ Where will you get information you need?
- √ What types of pie might you consider learning how to make?
- √ Which recipe will you select for the pie crust?

Now take a look at the goal(s) you have recorded.

- √ List the steps you will need to take to complete your goal.
- √ Plan time needed to complete each step. (You can use the monthly *4-H Goal Calendar*, VI-2021M-SQ, to help you plan when you will do each step.)

Step 4. Do it!

As the year goes along, record what you do and learn in your project(s). Include what worked well, what did not work, and what you enjoyed most.

You also can list things that you did related to your project(s), such as communication, citizenship (helping others), and leadership (leading, teaching, organizing) activities, as well as recognition that you earned.

Pictures, clippings, project worksheets (e.g., livestock, horticulture, photography, food and nutrition), exhibit write-ups, and other items can be included to help tell what you have done. Be creative and have fun.

Sometimes goals change during the year. That's okay. Maybe it wasn't possible to take your dog for obedience training. Just say so; your 4-H leaders and others will understand. Not everything we plan turns out the way we had planned. Explain why. It is important to learn how to adapt, too. Start now to set new goals for next year.

You are encouraged to reflect on your total 4-H experience. You can summarize all your participation in projects, events, and activities together by using the *Yearly 4-H Summary* or recording a *4-H Story*.

You can use the *Yearly 4-H Summary*, 4H-96, to record everything you do in 4-H throughout the year. Don't forget to list your family, school, and community activities. These things are a part of your life, just as 4-H is. What you learn in one place can help you in other situations and places. As you add information, you can see what you did throughout the year. You can see how you have grown through 4-H by doing more and different things.

Another way to evaluate your 4-H experience is to write or record a *4-H Story*. It should focus on the project area(s), events, and activities in which you participated. Try to tell how your total participation in 4-H contributed to personal growth, self-esteem, new learning, skills, and concern for others. Also consider how 4-H influenced school participation, use of leisure time, and future career plans.



The following is a suggested outline to help you write a story.

- Introduce yourself.
- Briefly tell about each project; summarize what you did and learned.
- Highlight club, county, and state events and activities in which you participated.
- Tell how 4-H has helped you become a better citizen and leader and what you have learned from events or community service activities with your club.
- Describe how 4-H participation has helped you feel good about yourself.
- Tell about what you want to do next year.

Completing the Process

At the end of the year, you can use the *4-H Record Keeping Self-evaluation* (4H-98) as a guide to evaluate the 4-H record keeping system you chose to use.

It is most helpful to talk about what you have done during the year with a leader, another 4-H'er, a parent/guardian, or someone interested in your 4-H participation. They can help by asking questions or making suggestions to think about using the *4-H Member/Mentor Conference Guide VI-2025C-sas*.

Originally prepared by a 4-H record-keeping task force in 1997. Lonna Nachtigal, illustrator.

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