

Tips for Conducting Club Meetings

Structure Meetings Appropriately

The way club meetings are structured depends largely on the size of the group and the age of the members. In general, 4-H meetings are divided into 3 segments:

- Business Meeting - Members learn how to conduct a meeting and practice democratic decision-making.
- Educational Program – Usually project work but may involve special presentations or activities conducted by resource people, parents or older members.
- Refreshments and Recreation

The order of these segments and the amount of time devoted to each may be varied to suit the specific activities planned, time and place the meeting is held, etc. Here are some specific suggestions:

1. **When members can't settle down and focus on the task at hand**, a short active game followed by a quiet one can release energy and get the group ready for more "serious business." If the club's recreation leader always comes prepared with at least one active and one quiet game to play these can be led at a time like this rather than at the end of the meeting.
2. **The timing of meeting segments** must relate to both the attention span of the age group and the nature of the activities planned. A Clover Kid activity should last no more than 15 to 20 minutes. On the other end of the continuum, older teens can sustain interest for 2 hours or more. But no activity should be conducted for more than an hour without a break.
3. **Sharing club leadership with your members** makes your job easier and develops life skills in the members. Some children are "natural leaders" but all children can lead when given the opportunity and support. To foster the development of leadership characteristics, group followers with followers – a leader will emerge from within this group. Group leaders with leaders – strong personalities will be forced to negotiate. Support both groups with suggestions that relate to group process

Use the 4-H Business Meeting as a Developmental Tool

In addition to learning the standard procedures for running a meeting, participation in 4-H business meetings helps members:

- Gain experience in planning
- Learn how to make group decisions
- Assume leadership
- Develop a sense of responsibility

But this does not happen automatically; the members must be actively involved in planning and conducting the meeting, rather than simply following a script provided by the leader. The following tips will help you make the business meeting a truly educational experience.

- 1. Elect officers democratically.** Officers are elected only once each year, unless a vacancy must be filled. It is best to change positions every year so that members have an opportunity to learn and practice the role of several different offices. Before nominations are made, review the duties of all officers and stress the importance of selecting people who have the right skills for the job: the secretary should be able to write neatly or use computers, the president should be fair to everyone, and the treasurer should be good at math and managing money.

The duties of 4-H Club Officers can be found in the Club Officer Hand Book. Since it is not wise for a club to have more officers than general members, you may use one or more combined offices (Secretary/Treasurer, Vice President/News Reporter, Song and Recreation Leader). Conversely, clubs may also “invent” extra offices such as “refreshment chairman” or “safety officer” to give everyone a job.

Ensure that officers receive training. Encourage new officers to participate in any officer training program offered by the county 4-H office. If none is available, meet with them to review the things they need to do before, during and after meetings.

- 2. Use an agenda planner.** Work with the president and secretary to fill in the agenda planner, using the previous meeting’s minutes to identify the old business and any committees that may need to report. The agendas for small clubs of elementary school youth are generally short and simple, so the agenda can be planned a few minutes before other members arrive.

After the president and secretary have planned agendas with you a few times, they should be able to do most of it themselves before the meeting day. You will only need to check it over and add the new business when they arrive.

- 3. Utilize Parliamentary Procedure.** More info about this can be found on the “Parliamentary Procedure Script”

Involve Junior Leaders

Junior Leaders are 4-H teens who partner with adults to provide leadership for 4-H clubs and countywide 4-H activities. Depending on age and experience, a junior leader can serve as a general assistant, teach a project, mentor individual members, coordinate activities or assume almost any other 4-H leadership role under the supervision of an adult.

Involving junior leaders in your club program not only “lightens the load” for you, it also adds a spark of energy and enthusiasm, provides role models for younger members, and gives the teens a valuable opportunity to practice their leadership skills.