



30 Things to Know About 4-H

What is 4-H? 4-H is a volunteer-led organization that reaches boys and girls through small groups called clubs and sometimes in classrooms. 4-H members decide for themselves which of more than 40 projects they want to learn more about. Most projects use hands-on learning experiences to teach subject matter and life-skills such as cooperation, leadership, and decision-making — skills that can be applied over and over for a lifetime.

What do the H's stand for? Head, Heart, Hands, and Health.

What is the 4-H emblem? A green four-leaf clover with a white "H" on each clover leaf.

Why do young people like 4-H? They have fun with friends at meetings, social activities, tours, trips, camps, and fairs. They learn to do interesting things such as take care of animals, plants, redecorate their rooms, fix their bikes, take pictures, practice cooking, and collecting rocks. And, they help others to learn more about their 4-H projects, provide leadership to younger kids, as well as serve others through community service activities.

Who can join 4-H? 4-H is for boys and girls who will reach their 8th birthday and will not reach their 19th birthday by January 1st of the current year. It is open to everyone, regardless of race, religion, color, disability, gender, or place of residence. Most Missouri County 4-H Programs offer a pre-4-H program called Clover Kids for youth 5-7 years old.

Who provides leadership in 4-H? 4-H in Missouri is sponsored by University of Missouri Extension and Lincoln University. Nationally, it is part of the Extension Service of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. Local leadership is provided by 4-H Youth Specialists in the extension county offices which is supported financially by county, state, and federal tax dollars.

4-H Clubs

What do you do at the first meeting? Get acquainted and have fun with a group mixer and/or some refreshments. Show and talk about some projects the group might like. (Give this some thought in advance and invite the 4-H Youth Specialist or an experienced 4-H leader.) Discuss when, where, and how often the group will meet.

Should 4-H clubs have dues? Many 4-H clubs do charge minimal annual dues. A portion pays the state and county dues. The remainder is used for club activities and community service projects. Clubs may conduct fundraisers to supplement their programming needs. Dues cannot be used as a barrier to keep someone from joining 4-H.

What about officers? 4-H clubs elect officers and whatever committees they need to conduct their business. 4-H has instructional materials available for presidents, vice-presidents, secretaries, treasurers, news reporters, recreation leaders, historians, song and game leaders. The club may have any number of officers, depending on its needs. It is a good idea to wait until the second or third meeting to elect officers so members know each other better.

Who names a club? The members of the club do — with guidance from their leader and 4-H Youth Specialist.

4-H Members

How often do 4-H clubs meet? Some clubs meet every month year round and others meet every week for a month or two. This depends on the needs and desires of the group. 4-H clubs organize between September and December each year.

Where do 4-H clubs meet? Any place is acceptable if it is large enough and is convenient for the members of the group. Some clubs meet in leaders or members homes. Some meet in a central location such as a community room, school or church.

How big should a club be? This depends on the age of the members, the space available for their meetings, and the leadership available. The ideal club is big enough to have fun together, but small enough for everybody to feel a part of the group. The average club in Missouri has 10 to 20 members and two or three leaders.

4-H Leaders

What is a 4-H leader? An adult who works voluntarily with a group of 4-H members.

Are there different kinds of leader? Yes. Some adults teach members how to do things and are called "project leaders." They usually have a special interest or skill such as photography or clothing or gardening. Adults who help a group get organized and run its meetings are called "volunteer club coordinators." Can the same person be a project and an organizational leader? Sure — if they have the time and interest. Sometimes big clubs divide these jobs and have several project leaders and teen leaders to meet all the interests of 4-H members.

How many leaders should a 4-H club have? That depends on the size of the club and the ages of its members. 4-H guidelines suggest a minimum of two leaders per club and clubs with an enrollment of 40 or more members have three to five leaders to share the workload and give individual attention to the members.

Where do I learn how to be a 4-H leader? Your main help would come from the County University of Missouri Extension office. The 4-H Youth Specialist can discuss with you your interest in working with youth and your previous experience. Extension supports recognized volunteers. Missouri 4-H is providing safe environments for everyone involved in youth activities. Volunteers are asked to complete the process described here to become an officially recognized volunteer: <http://4h.missouri.edu/volunteer.aspx>

4-H Projects

What are 4-H projects? A 4-H project is a series of learning experiences for members. More than 40 projects are available in the Missouri 4-H Program. Most projects have manuals to assist the 4-H leader and member with their project.

What is a 4-H project manual? A project manual contains help and direction needed to complete the project. Some projects have a manual for each division. Others have one manual which is used for several years.

What does a 4-H project cost? It varies. A member enrolled in Visual Arts might use supplies from around the home to practice the skills he or she is learning and have no additional expense. A member who buys and keeps a horse might invest several hundred dollars. Members should consider cost as they select a project. It should be realistic to the family situation.

Are 4-H members expected to do their own project work? Yes — with help. 4-H is a "learning by doing" program. Leaders, youth leaders, and parents may tell or show a member how, but members are expected to learn how to do things themselves.

What is an exhibit? An exhibit is an object or display designed to help a member show what he or she has accomplished. Ideally it motivates a youth to learn and to have fun in a 4-H project. An exhibit is not an end in itself, nor does it measure all the learning that takes place from completing a project.

Are projects done individually or as a club? Both. Some projects like Geology are more fun when done as a group. Others like making a dress or baking cookies will be done individually.

4-H Meetings

What happens at meetings? 4-H clubs usually do five general kinds of things: project work, conduct business meetings, recreation or social activities, community service work and special interest programs.

Do they do all of those things at one meeting? Sometimes they have a little business meeting, work on their projects for a while, then have recreation. Occasionally the whole meeting is devoted to one thing. For example, members may bring their dog, practice obedience training, or they might elect officers and plan the club program, have a pizza-making party, or tour a local business. Variety is important.

Who plans the program for the club? Members of the club. This might be done at a meeting of the club or ideas are collected and a committee puts together a program.

When do clubs meet and how long do meetings last? This depends on the group. Many clubs meet after school, in the evening or on Saturday. The most important thing is to have a regular time to get together, one that can be remembered.

4-H Parents

What should parents know about 4-H leaders? It's important to understand that leaders are unpaid volunteers. Parents should attend a meeting or volunteer to hold a meeting in their home so they can see how the leader works with club.

How do you get parents to help? Ask them. Be specific about jobs the club needs help with. Think positively. People who expect help usually get it. Offer a choice of jobs as parents can provide different amounts of time and abilities. Ask the young people to ask their parents to help.

As a 4-H parent, how can I help my child? Counsel your child in the selection of 4-H projects that are interesting and can be conveniently financed. Continue to show interest and enthusiasm after the projects have been selected. Help your child understand how to carry out the various phases of the project. But don't do the project or them. Your job is to teach, not govern; to guide, not control. Learn to give increased freedom as your child develops.

