Sample 4-H Project Story Guidelines

The 4-H story should be the fun part. Here is where you can tell about fun things that happened and what you learned from them.

In general, your story should have 2 parts:
- Part 1 about the specific project and
- Part 2 about your experiences in 4-H outside of the project

All stories should be 1 page or less.

If you do multiple project books you can re-arrange your stories so that each project book has a section with the information about the project, but they would all have similar abbreviated sections about your other 4-H experiences.

These guidelines are abbreviated from the longer Missouri 4-H Recognition Form (MRF) and Missouri 4-H College Scholarship Application. You should plan to save your work every year so that you will be ahead when you do the MRF and Scholarship Application.

Project Story Suggestions for 8-10 year olds:

**Part One:**
Write about the project and interesting experiences in the project.

**Part Two:**
Write about:
- (1) Who you are and why you joined 4-H;
- (2) Things you have learned in 4-H (in other projects and activities in 4-H – not this project); and
- (3) What you like best about being a 4-H member.

Project Story Suggestions for 11-13 year olds:

**Part One:**
Describe experiences associated with this 4-H project this year. You could include knowledge and skills you learned (other than what you listed in your project report). You could also describe how you have used problem solving or responsibility, practiced good sportsmanship or list possible careers related to this project that you may have interests in pursuing.

**Part Two:**
Choose one or more of the following 5 areas and write about your experiences this year with that topic. Try to include things that you have not already written about in your Project report or in Part 1. In your story tell how you are applying these 4-H lessons to change in your life and/or your community. You can include stories about how you have learned about these things from family, school, the community or other organizations, but most of the story should be on 4-H experiences.

1. **Communicating as part of Leadership**
   Speaking before groups one part of communication but also listening and watching others behavior (nonverbal feedback), talking with small groups, on the phone, getting feedback from others, and writing are also communication skills. Describe your skills and give specific examples, such as how listening changed your actions, or how nonverbal feedback encouraged you to ask more questions.
2. Getting Along with Others as part of Leadership
Understanding and appreciating the people you meet is vital to success in leading groups. To be a leader in 4-H, you will need to gain the trust and support of the individuals in your group. Skills in meeting, accepting, caring, and trusting are basic to building teamwork. Describe how you have used your skills to be a part of your group and build a team attitude.

3. Learning to Learn as part of Leadership
Helping people make changes is what leadership is all about. Learning to learn is learning how to make desired changes. You may have to change your attitude to try new things. The things you know may be applied in new and creative ways. What are some ways you learn new things? Do you learn better in groups or by yourself? Can you learn with games and songs? Do you see that youth of differing ages have differing abilities to learn? Describe how you and your group have been able to learn new things.

4. Citizenship
Citizenship is being informed about and helping to make good decisions for your club, community, county and world. It is different from community service which is about serving others. Citizenship experiences may include, but are not limited to: volunteering on Election Day, representing your peers on a council or senate, participation on local 4-H council, understanding your local government, job shadowing a government official, reading the local newspaper, writing a letter to the editor of the local newspaper, voting and voicing your opinion at club meetings or learning about other cultures. Describe what you learned about your community, school or country, as well as about yourself, in the process.

5. Community Service
Community service is what you do as an individual or with others to help the community. Write a narrative of your community service experiences. (Include both your 4-H or outside 4-H). Identify community service projects or activities in which you have been involved, describe your level of involvement and what you learned through the experience.

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Project Story Suggestions for 14-18 year olds:

Part 1:
Describe what you learned in the project and how you used that knowledge. What activities did you do and how much time and money did you spend? Describe how you have used problem solving, responsibility, practiced good sportsmanship and possible careers related to these projects and activities you may have interests in pursuing and how these experiences are going to help you in the future and what that means to your community, country, and world.

Part Two:
Choose one of the 7 leadership skills and one other area (Citizenship, Community service or career goals) to write about. Try to include things that you have not already written about in your Project report or in part 1. In your story tell how you are applying these 4-H lessons to change your life and/or your community. You can include stories about how you have learned about these things from family, school, the community or other organizations, but the emphasis should be on 4-H experiences.

Relate one or more of these 7 skills to the leadership roles you have held during the past year such as holding an office, being on a committee, participation in a project, or teaching others:

1. Understanding Self
Developing leadership relies heavily on inner strengths of the leader. What have you discovered about yourself as a leader? How has 4-H helped you identify and overcome a fear (like being in charge of a recognition banquet, co-chairing some special event, or speaking in front of a large group). Or think about how your experience, such as being a leader’s assistant, helped you understand strengths. What were those strengths and how did the experience shape them?
2. **Communicating**  
See the description under the 11-13 yr old section.

3. **Getting Along with Others**  
See the description under the 11-13 yr old section.

4. **Learning to Learn**  
See the description under the 11-13 yr old section.

5. **Making Decisions**  
Decision making is a life skill that you will use every day. Helping groups make decisions requires you to help them work through the decision making process. In a group or as an individual, to make a decision these are the steps: define the problem, gather information about it, list alternative solutions to the problem, weigh the consequences of each solution, decide on the best action, follow through, and then evaluate the results. Give specific examples of some decisions you have made in 4-H, the process you or your group used to reach your decision, and the results. Describe what you learned throughout the decision making process.

6. **Managing Resources**  
As you work with larger groups, management skills become more crucial. To help groups use the resources available to achieve goals, careful planning is required. This involves identifying resources (time, things, people or money) and using those resources effectively. Identify ways you have managed resources and relate to planning. What goals did you set? What resources or help did you need to reach your goals? How positive were the results? What did you learn?

7. **Working with Others**  
In your experiences in 4-H, you have had opportunities to examine how groups work. You have seen how the leader’s behavior influences the group’s behavior. (Example: autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire) You may have learned how to create good group environments by focusing on group members’ needs and motivations. You have developed your skills in helping people work together cooperatively and in making decisions through consensus. Think about a specific activity where you were a leader and describe how you have worked with others. What made the experience a challenge – the people, personalities, differences in interests or skills, size of the group, number or size of the tasks, special conditions in the group or outside environment? What kind of things did you do with a group to help set goals, develop budgets, divide labor and delegate responsibilities?

Choose one or more of the following to discuss in addition to the leadership section:

1. **Citizenship:**  
See the description in the 11-13 yr old section.

2. **Community Service**  
See the description in the 11-13 yr old section. Also include your level of involvement.

3. **College and Career Goals**  
Discuss the following questions: How will post-secondary education assist you in attaining your career goals? What is your major field of study? What are your reasons for choosing this course of study?
Sample Story By Chris Clover (age 14) Actually this story is compiled from several Jefferson County 4-H members’ work – thanks to them!!

Part One:
I joined 4-H because a few of my friends were into it and they said it was fun. Even though I had never even heard of it before, I decided to go with them. 4-H involves experiencing many new activities and challenging myself to do my best in many different areas. One of my favorite challenges this year is photography.

I got the opportunity to practice photography with the rest of my club. We learned as a group about the settings on our cameras, and we even took pictures together in the graveyard next to the church where we hold our meetings. We also had several meetings where we looked at each other’s pictures and used constructive criticism to suggest improvements on those pictures. In this way, I evolved with my club as a better photographer, and I had a lot of fun along the way. I believe this will help me later on in life by allowing me to capture my memories with photos.

I did not spend very much money in the photography project, but I did spend many hours, in which I did a lot of hard work and had a great deal of fun. Not only did my experiences improve my skills, but I learned about working in groups as we worked together creating a club scrap book. I will be better prepared to work with others when I get older and enter “the real world.” Without a doubt, being able to work with others will help me in bettering my community, country, and world.

Part Two:
Understanding Self
“I can’t do this. I don’t want to do this. I’m going to mess up.” These were the thoughts that ran through my head before speaking in front of large audiences. Throughout this year in 4-H, my public speaking skills have greatly improved. With my speech at achievement night, reasons at horse judging, introduction at camp, and final address when running for office, my skills dramatically improved and my fear diminished. Even when I did mess up, no one laughed or made fun of me. Each good job helped boost my confidence. My ultimate test came when I ran for office of the 4-H Council. When I made my speech during the end awards banquet, I began to get nervous. However, I remembered all of the other speeches I had given. I told myself I could succeed at conquering my fear of public speaking and I did.

Working with Others
4-H has offered a lot of ways to learn how to get along with one another. I have noticed that at every event I go to, there are always “get to know you” games. These are good ice-breakers that help us realize what we have in common, and they sometimes let us learn new things about others. I have brought back skills from county 4-H events to other events in my life, such as social events at school or at our own 4-H club. I have also learned through my local 4-H club how to get along with others. We have a great group of kids and parents that communicate well and help each other out.