



Letters to New Leaders: Letter 1

What is 4-H?

Welcome!

Volunteers are key in making 4-H “happen” for the youth and adult club or program members. Through- out its rich history of 100+ years, 4-H learned many things about creating positive youth development experiences in local 4-H clubs.

YOU are the key! Your leadership is essential. We welcome you on this journey and do so with profound. Thanks, and appreciation.

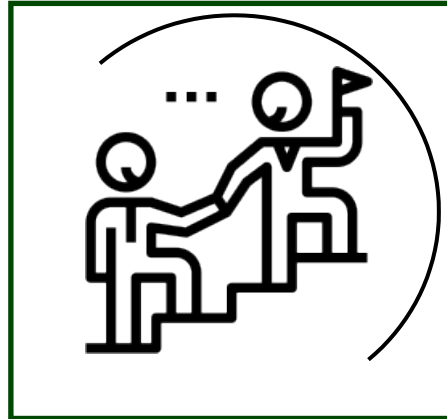
We believe you will find helpful information in this and subsequent Letters to Leaders useful.

This is the first of six letters designed for potential and new 4-H volunteer leaders. We suggest you keep these materials. When you have all six letters and the additional reference materials, you will have a useful 4-H leader’s handbook.

What is 4-H?

The 4-H program is the Cooperative Extension system’s youth development program. It connects caring adult volunteers with youth so they can learn leadership, citizenship, and life skills in a fun, experiential learning activities.

The 4-H program is for youth ages 8 and 18. Individual and group learning experiences are based on research-based projects and youth development strategies.



What is the Clover?

The most widely recognized symbol of 4-H is the 4-H clover. This emblem is a green four-leaf clover with a white or gold “H” in each leaf, representing Head, Heart, Hands, and Health. The 4-H name and emblem should be consistent with the educational purposes, character-building

What is a Leader’s Role?

4-H connects young people with caring adults. Adult interaction with youth is guided by the Essential Elements of 4-H. These elements are central to helping youth become competent and contributing adults.

4-H leaders are considered volunteer staff members of the University of Missouri. Leaders help youth develop basic, transferable skills that are useful in real life experiences today and in the future.

4-H members learn those skills through “experiential learning,” which consists of several steps:

- Participate in an activity
- Reflect on the completed activity
- Draw conclusions or observations from the experience
- Relate the findings to others or future life experiences

More Resources:

- 4-H Clover (Y603)- dates, 4-H projects, and events
- National 4-H: 4-H.ORG
-  4h.missouri.edu
-  [missouri4h](https://www.facebook.com/missouri4h)
-  [missouri4h](https://www.youtube.com/missouri4h)
-  [missouri4h](https://www.instagram.com/missouri4h)

Clover Kids is the program that teaches skills to children ages 5 to 7.

At the national level, 4-H is under the leadership of the United States Department of Agriculture. Missouri 4-H is part of MU Extension, and the state office is located on the Columbia campus of the University of Missouri. At the local level, each county has an Extension center that administers the 4-H program.

How Important are 4-H Projects?

Leaders help members to develop good habits, experiment with new and challenging ideas, and practice problem-solving skills. One-way leaders accomplish those goals is through 4-H projects.

The 4-H projects consist of activities centered around a specific subject. A list of projects is in the publication Y603, *4-H Clover*.

The 4-H projects help youth learn by doing. Projects also help members become self-directing and productive so they can:

- Lead satisfying lives
- Contribute to society
- Function effectively in a changing world

Each 4-H member or club chooses one or more projects according to interest and ability.

The projects require the individual or group to establish goals, work toward those goals, and evaluate the progress they make.

For leaders, assisting with the development of 4-H members is the ultimate goal, and projects are tools that help meet that goal.

By giving young people the chance to make decisions on their own, leaders help them develop creative thinking.

For more information about project curricula, contact your local 4-H staff or go to the state 4-H website at 4h.missouri.edu.

Welcome to 4-H!

In Missouri 4-H we believe in...

- **Clearer Thinking** by promoting character, maintaining excellence, and upholding the mission and honored programmatic traditions of 4-H.
- **Greater Loyalty** by embracing diversity and inclusion while encouraging and supporting innovation, youth leadership, and futures.
- **Larger Service** by encouraging meaningful, positive youth adult partnerships, community service, and engagement.
- **Better Living** by supporting youth to become healthy, respectful, and productive members of society.

Adapted from *Letters to New 4-H Leaders*, M.A. Dodd, L. Hoglum, and M. Robinson (1998) Oregon State University Cooperative Extension, Corvallis, OR. Updated August 2017 by Elaine Anderson, Elaine George, Don Nicholson, Brittany Nieder, Tammy Gillespie, and Paula Skillicorn. Updated August 2022 by Stephanie Femrite and Sherry Grace.



Quality Matters in 4-H: A Checklist for Staff and Volunteers

- ✓ I know how to provide a safe physical and emotional youth program environment
- ✓ I know how to provide a warm welcome to all youth, free of bias or exclusionary behavior
- ✓ I know the physical safety safeguards I should put in place at all 4-H events
- ✓ I know best practice strategies for helping youth reframe conflict if needed
- ✓ I know how to support youth engagement with materials and abstract ideas
- ✓ I allow youth officers the opportunity to maintain control of at least 50 percent of club meetings
- ✓ I know how to support youth interaction through multiple planning techniques
- ✓ I know how to provide all youth with specific encouragement rather than blanket praise
- ✓ I know how to support youth decision-making in content and process choices
- ✓ I know how to create opportunities for all youth to serve in a leadership role in some capacity
- ✓ I know how to create opportunities for all youth to express ideas with others
- ✓ I know how to provide all youth with opportunities to reflect and evaluate activity and club experiences

Thank you for your commitment to improving the 4-H program quality through volunteer development!