



# 4-H Project Leader Guide

## You are a 4-H project leader

A 4-H project leader is a **Very Important Person** in the world of 4-H. You will:

- ♦ help members learn skills they will use throughout life;
- ♦ help members reach their goals;
- ♦ serve as a role model; and
- ♦ become an approved 4-H volunteer.

Becoming an approved volunteer is part of the Missouri 4-H plan to ensure the safety of 4-H members. Character education is a top priority. This includes the six pillars of character:

- Trustworthiness
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Fairness
- Caring
- Citizenship



A part of your role is to include these pillars in your 4-H project experience.

## Qualities that will help you be a great project leader

- ♦ Caring about 4-H members;
- ♦ Helping them feel good about themselves;
- ♦ Developing meaningful relationships with 4-H members;
- ♦ Understanding the ages and stages of youth development;
- ♦ Organizing learning experiences;
- ♦ Having patience to help 4-H members set and achieve their goals.

Each of these qualities will be helpful to you as a project leader.

## So I said I'd be a project leader...now what do I do?

- Secure the curriculum from your 4-H club leader or from [4h.missouri.edu](http://4h.missouri.edu). The 4-H Clover or the Missouri 4-H website will provide you with a list of curriculum and resources for your project area as well

as general information about the project you are leading. There are many free resources on our site, but some curriculum is purchased from other vendors, which can be accessed from our site.

- Read the literature carefully, know the requirements and the prerequisites, and let members of your group set individual and group goals.
- Study the leader/helper guide and adapt it to your situation.
- List skills the members should know in order to complete work.
- Decide what skills to include in each project group.
- Decide what you and members are to do at each meeting. (Check out the Project Leader planning calendar to help with this!)
- Prepare needed materials before the meeting.
- Receive the names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of the members enrolled in your project from your club leader or your local University of Missouri Extension center.
- Keep attendance and project/animal records. We recommend:
  - \* **4-H Project Record**, Y620—will enable you to help members determine their personal goals for the project and may be used in your club and county 4-H program as a record of the member's completion of the project.
  - \* **Project Meeting Attendance form**, Y644
  - \* **Animal Record forms/books**—these vary dependent on project.

Many counties have 4-H newsletters that will provide additional information for 4-H leaders and members on awards and opportunities available, deadlines, etc. Watch for yours in the mail.

Missouri 4-H encourages each project leader to have 6 hours of teaching/contact time with members. Check with your club leader, project advisor or your local MU Extension center about completion requirements for your club and county. Also, ask what is eligible to be exhibited at the fair. Ask about community service opportunities in the project area.

## How do I teach?

The 4-H program was established around the model of *learning to do by doing* called the experiential learning model. Refer to MU Extension publication LG783, *Learning by Doing*, for a description of this effective model of teaching.

Not all projects lend themselves to any one method of teaching. An effective teaching method is usually one in which the learner is able to use more than one set of senses to learn. The teaching method used will depend on the nature of the subject and the project goal.

Another teaching method is *show and tell*. Members repeat what the teacher or leader demonstrates. With this method, the member can hear, see, feel and sometimes smell.

The use of *practical problem situations* that members work out is another teaching method. A *discussion* that involves members can be very instructional.

## What other activities can be added to the project group?

In addition to taking part in the regular project meeting, members can participate by:

- Planning and carrying out project events such as field trips, tours, special exhibits, events for parents, etc.
- Giving demonstrations or judging and exhibiting at local, county or area 4-H Achievement Day.
- Community service activities
- Skill-a-thons

When planning activities, keep in mind the ages and abilities of the youths and the available resources. For additional examples of activities, refer to the project briefs located on the Missouri 4-H Web site at [4h.missouri.edu](http://4h.missouri.edu).

## The first meeting

Many experienced 4-H project leaders like to invite members and parents to the first project meeting. This helps parents understand what will be involved, and they can help select project activities that will fit the family budget.

You can use this meeting to set project

meeting dates times, places that will fit the family calendar. One way to do this is to have weekly meetings for 6 weeks; another is to have monthly meetings for 6 months. For younger 4-H members it's important to get started early — while they are interested.

If parents are involved with the goal-setting process, they can provide additional support at home.

This meeting can be a good investment of time and energy for everyone who takes part!

## Project meeting outline

Here is a suggested project meeting plan. Following this plan will help you envision the direction you hope to take. Involve members in the planning process as much as possible and keep their goals in mind as you plan each meeting. Work with 4-H members at the end of your project to review goals, evaluate their progress and help them learn from the experience.

### Interest getter (15-20 minutes)

Ideas include identification quizzes, judging contests, relay skill games, films or slides, a tour of the host member's project and guest speakers.

### Skill session (30-50 minutes)

The majority of time spent in most meetings should be spent *doing* — practicing a job or skill. Be sure to include the elements of experience, sharing, processing, generalizing and applying in your session.

### Discussion (15-20 minutes)

Use this time for questions and answers, coming events, comments on presentations given and assigned, and members' reports on project problems.

### Demonstration (10 minutes)

Ask one member to give a demonstration at each meeting. (This gives 4-H'ers a chance to develop and practice demonstrations that will be given at 4-H club meetings and Achievement Day.)

### Record keeping (10-15 minutes)

Allow time for members to work on calendars and *4-H Project Record*, Y620.

### Summary and assignments (10-20 minutes)

Have members summarize the day's meeting. Plan for the next meeting — where, when and what to bring.

### Refreshments and recreation

Recreation and refreshments are optional, but these activities help to keep the members' interest. Youth leaders can plan and organize this portion of the meeting.

## Preparation for project meetings

- Plan carefully. Good beginnings are important and pay off with high interest.
- Make your first meeting of each club year an organizational meeting for both members *and* parents.
- Order 4-H project curriculum (see [4h.missouri.edu](http://4h.missouri.edu) for ordering). You may not have all project materials prior to the first meeting.
- Prepare needed materials in advance of each meeting — read literature carefully.
- Study leader and/or member guides and adapt them to your situation.
- Make a list of skills or practices that members must know to complete the project. Begin with basic ones and introduce advanced ones as the project progresses.
- Give each member definite responsibilities as frequently as possible. Try to match each responsibility to each member's needs.
- Use experienced members, parents and others in the community as resources.
- Encourage goal setting and record keeping. Helping members set challenging goals that are achievable will help you plan the remaining project meetings. The goals should be ones the 4-H'er can control. For younger members, helping break them down to shorter-term goals may also be of help.

## First project meeting tips

The first meeting should be held in October or November of the current year. Duration should be 1 to 1½ hours (maximum).

- If members do not know one another, plan a simple, fun way to introduce everyone. Take roll.
- Identify projects that members would like to complete for the year.
- Begin to outline project goals and expectations for the overall project group and for each member's project. Discuss skills and knowledge to be learned. Discuss project requirements, rules and discipline. (A blackboard, posters or sheets of blank newsprint may be helpful.)
- Discuss with the group:



- \* Member expectations
- \* Dates for eight meetings; place and time of meetings
- \* How project supplies used at meetings will be acquired
- \* Project costs and how expenses will be met (Each member is responsible for his or her personal project expenses. Cost of supplies for meeting can be shared by members.)
- \* What to bring to meetings
- \* Dates of special activities and how to participate
- \* Completion date for the projects
- Answer questions. Make assignments. Distribute and/or take orders for project literature.
- Share contact information and the best way to communicate with members/parents.
- Fun activity — Use a game, a relay or some other interactive activity to reinforce what was discussed earlier.
- Adjourn.
- Review the meeting with your youth leader and/or assistant leaders. See how they felt about the meeting. Help them analyze their part. Be encouraging and supportive. (Do a review after every meeting.)
- Order literature.

(You can complete your own ***Project Meeting Plan Worksheet*** on our website.)

### Other sources of help:

- Your local MU Extension center
- Public Library
- [4h.missouri.edu](http://4h.missouri.edu)

## **Project leader frequently asked questions**

### **What is a project?**

The purpose or goal of 4-H is to create environments in which young people are valued, contributing members of their community.

Projects have been described as the foundation of 4-H because they provide the base for the learning experiences that contribute to personal development. Three major purposes of project work are to:

- **Provide** members with knowledge, skills and problem solving abilities.
- **Encourage** members to develop an interest in a career.
- **Help** young people in developing a favorable self-image.

### **Do I have meetings and when should I start?**

Yes, most definitely. You need to start early in the year and call the group together for the first meeting. You may want to include parents at the first meeting.

### **Where do I have these meetings?**

You can decide the location. Most often, the meetings are held in the home of the project leader or a member's home. Equipment sometimes limits the meeting places.

### **How many meetings should I have?**

A minimum of six hours of instruction is the goal. As a general guideline, you should plan eight meetings to allow for scheduling conflicts. Meetings are held for 1 to 1½ hours. The number, ages and attention spans of the youths in the group should be considered. Younger members may want to meet weekly. Most important is for all youths in your project to have an opportunity to complete the project to meet your and their expectations. All project work does not need to be done at the project meeting.

During the year, a skill-a-thon, judging, field trip, demonstration day and/or community service can be incorporated into your project meeting or 4-H club meeting as a starter or part of the program.

### **What resources do I have?**

Start by looking in the Clover or at [4h.missouri.edu](http://4h.missouri.edu) for the following:

- Leader/helper guide for most projects
- Member manual for most projects
- University of Missouri Extension publications obtained from your local MU Extension center for some projects.
- Project briefs
- Local library
- Extension faculty and staff
- Other leaders in your club or county

### **What about finances?**

Finances vary depending on the project, but each child/family is responsible for paying for their materials. Sometimes a project leader will purchase all the materials and divide the cost. A project leader may ask members to bring items. Either way, the member/family is responsible for their project materials.

### **What is a youth leader?**

A youth leader is a 4-H member, age 14 or over, who will help you in leading the project. Youth leaders may be helpful in organizing the group, teaching some skills, arranging field trips presenting demonstrations, or setting up skill-a-thons and judging activities. Some groups may not have a youth leader.

### **Who can be a project leader and long do I serve?**

Any person who has an interest in the subject chosen by the members can be a project leader. Important qualifications are: necessary time to do the job, an understanding of youths and their development, and orientation training.

The job of project leader starts at the beginning of the 4-H club year October 1 and ends at the close of the club year September 30 the following year.

### **What is the goal of the project leader?**

The goal is to help each young person develop to his or her greatest potential. Your success can be measured by the growth of each 4-H'er, not by the number or quality of projects made.