

**Missouri 4-H**

4-H Center for Youth Development

University of Missouri

**Self-Determined Projects:**

**Choose Your Own Direction**

**T**he self-determined project is exactly what it sounds like – you decide what topic you want to learn about, set goes for yourself, plan how to meet those goals and evaluate your efforts. This project is for youths who want to enroll in projects that 4-H doesn’t offer or who want to study a regular 4-H project in more depth and detail.

We all need ways to express our individuality, and even though 4-H offers a great a great variety of projects, self-determined projects expand the possibilities to the limits of a creative mind.

**Who can enroll?**

Anyone may select a self-determined project. This project will require you to take on a great deal of responsibility, make your own decisions, think of solutions to problems and know when to seek advice. You don’t have to enroll in a self-determined project all by yourself; two or three youths may work together to plan a project. In fact, learning to accomplish goals as a group is a valuable experience in itself.

**Do you need a leader?**

4-H members may enroll in self-determined projects without a leader. However, before you begin planning your whole project, it’s a good idea to find an adult who can serve as a resource person, just in case you run into problems. Find an adult who has a good background in the subject you have chosen. Your relationship with this adult is more likely to be one of a friend, parent or advisor that a leader in the traditional sense.

**Record keeping**

Unless you want to design your own record, we recommend that you use the Universal Project Record, Y620. There’s enough space on this record for you to list your goals, objectives and accomplishments. Just attach more pages if you need extra space.

**Project possibilities**

 The list of possibilities for self-determined projects is as varied as the personalities of Missouri 4-Her’s. Here are just a few examples: international studies, Christmas customs in other lands, holiday decorations, history of your country, interesting stories as told by the elderly in your community, chemistry, dance, climatology, animal behaviors, genealogy, sports card collecting, go karts and raising deer.

You may make specific articles or limit your project or research and the preparation of a report. You may repeat your project, but you should develop a new plan each time.

**Can I exhibit?**

The answer will vary from county to county. You should consult with your local 4-H faculty or staff about your county’s rules for the fair. Some counties permit every member to exhibit at least one item in the local achievement day or fair. If your county is one of these, they may make provisions for exhibits from self-determined projects.

In other counties, because of lack of space or premium money, the local 4-H councils may not include self-determined projects unless your interest area corresponds with the established exhibits list.

**How do I start?**

Sometimes its hard to narrow the list of all your ideas to one topic that would work as a self-determined project. Answering these questions should help.

***What subjects really interest you?***

If you are like most people, you are interested in many things. Write down every project idea you can think of. Are there any topics you could group together? Do several of your topics have something in common? Find a common thread and concentrate on that area.

***What would you like to learn or accomplish in each interest area?***

Try to establish priorities and concentrate on the things that are most important to you. To study something in depth, you need a narrow focus. You could spend a lifetime studying the development of dance around the world. Narrow the topic to one aspect of dance, such as dance in colonial American society, or dance in the 1960s as an expression of changes in society, or dance in the American theater.

***Which interest areas have resource people available to you?***

If you need help and there are no resource people available, you may not have a successful project. Decide early in the selection process whether you plan to “go it alone,” or interview people for specific kinds of help.

***Will this project help you decide a future career, or is it strictly a leisure-time pursuit?***

If you are career oriented, perhaps you may want to use this time and effort to narrow your career choices. If this is a leisure-time pursuit, then rank you areas of interest in terms of personal satisfaction.

***How much time, energy and cost are involved in this project?***

Before you start a project, make sure you have the time, energy and money to see the project through to its completion. Few of us gain much satisfaction out of a partially completed project. Frequently, money invested is lost if your effort is not completed. Prepare a budget for both time and money as a part of your plan.

**Resources available**

There are books, magazine articles, videos and newspaper stories on almost every subject, not to mention the people in your community who may be experts in the subject you are researching. If all else fails, you have the World Wide Web. Finding these resources may not always be easy, though. Some of the following contacts may be of help to you:

* School library
* Local library
* Local University of Missouri Extension center
* Your parents
* High school teachers
* Teen leaders
* Legislators
* Civic organizations
* Vocational-technical schools
* Private and public social agencies
* Other youth organizations
* Professional people
* Skilled trade people
* Local persons skilled in your area of interest
* World Wide Web.

**How do I evaluate my results?**

When you write down your accomplishments, make it more than just a list of when you did what. Write two or three descriptive paragraphs and answer questions like these:

* Did you meet your goals?
* Was your time schedule practical?
* Were your plans adequate?
* Did anything happen that you didn’t expect?
* Would you do anything differently if you could do it over again?
* Did you learn anything?
* Did you budget enough time and money?

Evaluation can be the most important part of your project. Comparing your results to your goals will help you make plans and decisions in the future.

**Guide for planning**

Follow these steps when planning your self-determined project:

1. Narrow your list of ideas to one interest area.
2. Set goals for what you hope to learn or accomplish.
3. Make a list of supplies, material or facilities needed.
4. Estimate cost of supplies and materials.
5. Identify references or resource people.
6. Develop a step-by-step plan of action.
7. Record results and evaluate.

Use the form on Page 3 as you complete the final phases of planning.

**Self-Determined Project**

**Year \_\_\_\_\_\_**

Subject or interest area \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Project goals: 1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What supplies are needed:

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

References or resource people:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Plan of action

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Results and evaluation

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_