Planning and Conducting 4-H Club Meetings

Dear 4-H Volunteer:

By now you may have questions about planning and conducting 4-H club meetings. This letter includes information about the basic, everyday components of a successful 4-H meeting.

Club officers and committees

Officers are an important part of the club’s leadership structure. Being an officer gives the member an opportunity to develop and practice leadership skills and responsibility. The following 4-H officers are usually elected in each club:

- President
- Vice-President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Reporter
- Recreation Leaders
- Song Leaders

Some other officers the club may want to elect include photographer, historian, inspirational officer and coordinators for the scrapbook, community service, fund-raisers and field trips.

There are special instruction sheets and materials for each of the primary offices. These publications can be ordered through your local Extension Office.
Because one of the goals of 4-H is to develop leadership skills, all members should have an opportunity to serve as an officer or committee chair during their 4-H experience. Even the youngest members can provide input by serving on a planning committee.

Committees help the 4-H club function more smoothly and efficiently as well as provide opportunities for more people to be involved. Club leaders and parents are encouraged to become involved in assisting 4-H'ers with planning and supervising various club activities, but members should be involved in making and implementing decisions.

**Teaching the 4-H pledge and motto**

Members and adults can better understand 4-H if the 4-H pledge and motto are presented to the club. The 4-H pledge should be recited at every 4-H meeting. When planning 4-H meetings with your club president, include both the Pledge of Allegiance and the 4-H Pledge as part of the club’s meeting agenda or ritual.

The 4-H pledge along with the corresponding motions is given below:

**I pledge:**
- My Head to clearer thinking, (salute with right hand)
- My Heart to greater loyalty, (place right hand over heart)
- My Hands to larger service, (arms bent, palms up)
- My Health to better living, (arms at sides)
- For my Club, (arms bent, palms facing each other about six inches apart)
- For my Community, (arms bent, palms facing each other, about 12 inches apart)
- For my Country, (arms bent, palms facing each other, about 3 feet apart)
- And my World. (arms bent and fully extended, palms facing up.)

The 4-H motto is "To make the best better." The leader may find it helpful to make a poster or have the 4-H'ers make a poster of the 4-H pledge and motto to use at each meeting so members can read and memorize them. After the first meeting, each member can take a turn leading the Pledge of Allegiance and the 4-H pledge to open the meetings. Many clubs close meetings with the 4-H motto recited in unison. Flag sets and other club meeting aids are also available from the
National 4-H Supply Catalog. Your local County Extension Office has copies of this catalog.

**Setting goals with your 4-H club**

It's helpful for you and your 4-H members to set a few basic goals for your club each year. These goals are statements of what the members would like to accomplish as a club. The goals should help the club meet the needs and interests of individual members. Examples of goals a club could set are:

- To meet at a regular time each month
- To have fun as well as educational meetings
- To provide a service to the community
- To introduce others to 4-H
- To learn more about a variety of 4-H projects
- To involve family members in 4-H activities
- Each member will complete at least one project

As a volunteer leader, you will want to set goals for yourself and encourage your 4-H members to set individual goals. These can be goals to achieve in leadership roles, in their project or in their personal development.

Goal-setting is an important life skill that can be taught through 4-H. Members should be encouraged to set goals and objectives (an objective is a strategy which will be utilized to achieve the goal) at the beginning of the 4-H year. Goals should be reviewed with the member throughout the year.

**Planning the 4-H club calendar**

After the club's goals have been established, use these goals to design a year-long program plan and club calendar. The calendar will tell you what the club is doing when and who is responsible for it. Monthly meeting guides will help direct the club's activities towards its goals.

Be sure to involve your 4-H members and their parents in developing the club calendar and yearly program plan. Allow all members to contribute their ideas and interests before choosing the activities for the year.
When selecting an activity, refer to your club's goals to see if the activity will help attain those goals. The calendar and plan should include a variety of activities to stimulate the club members' interest and enthusiasm. There should be educational presentations, for which a speaker or program is brought in to the meeting as well as demonstrations or educational programs by members. Project meetings can be scheduled to help members set goals for their projects, to provide information and ideas, to work on projects and to prepare for contests and fairs. Your club can plan a club show or project tour to share what members have done during the year with fellow members and others in the community. Social activities can be planned throughout the year to which family, friends and other 4-H clubs can be invited.

The club should also plan a community service project where members can work together to "make a difference" in their communities. Youth staff are a good source of ideas for club activities. You can contact your local 4-H staff to find out what the county and state calendars include, especially the dates of events, contests, fairs, etc. that are of interest to your members.

The 4-H meeting

Club meetings should be planned to include three areas:

- **Fun** — Plan 15 to 30 minutes for recreation, refreshment and fellowship
- **Business** — Allow 15 to 30 minutes for the business meeting, discussion and planning
- **Learning** — Include 30 to 45 minutes for demonstrations, community service activities, tours, guest speakers, presentations and project work.

Possible agenda items for 4-H club meetings

A recommended business order follows:
1. Call to order and welcome
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. 4-H Pledge
4. Inspiration / Devotion
5. Roll call and Mixers
6. Songs
7. Minutes of the last meeting
8. Approval of minutes
9. Treasurer's report
10. Officer and committee reports
11. Unfinished business
12. New business
13. Educational Activities
14. Adjournment
15. Recreation & Refreshments

The educational program usually begins after the formal business meeting is adjourned. Recreation and refreshments can also follow the meeting. Some clubs schedule refreshments and recreation before the meeting as welcome activities or to encourage prompt attendance. There are endless agenda variations and variety helps make the meeting more interesting.

An approach some clubs prefer is to alternate business meetings with project meetings, or to have short informal business sessions at some point during project meetings. You might consider trying a variety of methods to determine which works best with your members' age groups, your club's size and your project areas.

Involving parents with your club and selecting a parent of the month

Successful 4-H membership usually requires a great deal of parental support. There are a variety of methods for getting parents involved. The classic reason for becoming a volunteer leader is to provide an opportunity for a son or daughter to join 4-H. It is logical to encourage parents to become volunteers, assist committees or contribute to the club in other ways. Don't hesitate to ask parents to help the club. A sign-up list with a designated "Parent of the Month" can help the
organizational leader with such tasks as setting up the meeting room, clean-up, making last-minute contact with the program presenter, and assisting where needed.

Many clubs strongly encourage parents to attend all meetings with their children. Parents may be asked to chaperone a club activity, host a meeting, teach a special skill or share a particular interest. If they are sharing information with the club, it doesn't necessarily have to be related to a project. It could be regarding citizenship, leadership, community service, careers or other topics. Clubs could have a “parent of the month” who assists with the monthly meeting.

**Tours, activity days, field trips, etc.**

Your club members will enjoy a variety of field trips, tours and special activity days. Sometimes you teach them more in a well-planned field trip than in a regular club meeting. These special activities can involve a variety of experiences. They can be related to specific projects that club members are involved in. They can involve community service or be historical. Other 4-H leaders are an excellent source of ideas for field trips for your club.

Your 4-H members will enjoy planning and organizing these special events. They may even want to write to invite another club join them for the trip. If youth are going on a tour or trip, remember a health or medical release form must be included.

If you have further questions or concerns, contact your County Extension staff or another volunteer leader. Youth educators can provide leader training at club meetings if requested. We want to help you succeed.

Have a good meeting!

Kentucky 4-H recognizes the importance of good character in everything that is done. 4-H staff, volunteers, 4-H members and their families recognize a person of character is:

- looked up to and admired;
• knows the difference between right and wrong and always tries to do what is right;
• sets a good, positive example;
• makes the world a better place;
• lives according to the "Six Pillars of Character" — Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship.

How can I use the information in this letter?

Implement the information to develop an effective 4-H club meeting and program of activities. All 4-H clubs should elect officers, recite the pledge at each meeting, set goals annually, plan an annual calendar, develop an agenda for each meeting and use a variety of learning activities.

Please contact me at _____________ if you have additional questions or need more information. You'll receive your fourth letter in about one month.

Sincerely,

<name>

4-H/Youth Development Agent