## 4-H Members – Ages 8-19

### What is a 4-H Club?

Community 4-H clubs (once authorized by local Extension staff) consist of an organized group of boys and girls, with officers appropriate to the group, and under the supervision of one or more certified volunteer leaders. Clubs are frequently organized within a neighborhood, a school, a business or other location. Club size should be appropriate to the ages of the members, meeting place and leadership available. These clubs are encouraged to conduct at least one community service project annually to benefit disadvantaged individuals or other groups within their community. In addition to community 4-H clubs, youth may opt to participate through special interest groups/project clubs that focus on one specific topic, school enrichment or after-school programs. More information about the 4-H club system is available online from [nifa.usda.gov/resource/4-h-club-design-factsheets](http://nifa.usda.gov/resource/4-h-club-design-factsheets).

**What are the purposes of 4-H club meetings?**

Each 4-H club meeting should be designed to help youth:

• acquire new information

• learn to use leisure time creatively

• develop social skills

• acquire leadership and citizenship traits

• learn to conduct meetings

Meetings enable 4-H members to learn and practice decision-making and leadership skills in a group setting by using the knowledge and skills acquired at these meetings. Each 4-H member is expected to commit to attending club meetings, and to let the club leader know if it is necessary to miss a meeting. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend meetings with their children.Parental involvement demonstrates support for 4-H members, keeps them informed on club activities, and enables them to actively assist leaders. Remember, 4-H is a family affair!

**Club Structure**

 Most 4-H clubs typically use two types of meetings: the general club meeting and the project group meeting.

All 4-H members meet with a club leader in a general club meeting. A sample format follows. Such meetings include 4-H activities not directly related to a project. These meetings can be scheduled once a month, every other month, or as needed. They may coincide with the school year, but aren’t limited to it.

Every part of the meeting should be well planned by the officers and club leaders. The club leader should be involved only as necessary in demonstrations and other educational programs. Take care to choose topics of interest to all for the general meeting program. The range of methods for presenting material is broad. Demonstrations, talks, panel discussions, outdoor explorations, videos, slides, guest speakers, judging, and quizzes are all among the possibilities. Just remember that the 4-H philosophy is all about ‘learning by doing,’ so the program should have as much hands-on learning as possible.

In project group meetings, 4-H members meet with a leader to work on a specific project, such as knitting, space science, nature study, or small animals. At this meeting, the members would actually learn how to do some aspect of that particular project.

In conducting a project program:

* Limit the group to one project – for example, photography – or one project area, perhaps black-and-white photography or taking action shots. Depending on size, a project group meeting might be more effective if members worked in small groups on project subject areas, such as ‘photo composition’ or ‘how to prepare photographs for display in an exhibit.’
* If you do break up a project group, do so by age level and ability.
* If project members are young, have a project leader or teen leader for every four to five members. Younger members usually need more time and help than older members. Schedule their meetings more often.

The emphasis in project groups is on education, involvement, and doing. Leaders, group peers, and outside resource people all help explore the project subject or skill.

**What is a club meeting like?**

Each 4-H meeting normally lasts 1-2 hours and includes a business meeting, education, and recreation. Clubs may meet monthly or at any time determined by the club members. Meetings may include a variety of the following items:

**Business:** The business portion of the meeting should be short and snappy. It is a small democracy in action with members learning how to conduct meetings effectively, work with others through committee assignments, and cooperate with others in making decisions.

**Educational Programs:** This part of the meeting is designed to help members learn more about subjects of interest to the group. The program might include illustrated talks – using visual aids – and demonstrations – showing by doing – done by members; a field trip; a community service project; or a guest speaker.

**Recreation:** The recreation portion of the meeting distinguishes the 4-H meeting from other educational activities. Recreation may include challenges, group singing, relays, guessing games, singing games, active games, and quiet games.

Club leaders and members decide how to run their own meetings, but a suggested format is:

* Business meeting – 25%
* Education/Project Activity – 50%
* Recreation – 25%