

# 4-H Club Meeting & Program Planning

## Planning the Club Year: The Key to Success

Most 4-H leaders, members and their parents are busy people who are involved in a variety of family, school and community activities. 4-H has much to offer, but busy people must choose the opportunities that best fit their needs and schedules. Planning a yearly calendar will help everyone integrate 4-H activities with the rest of their personal commitments.

Adults and youth should work together to develop the yearly plan. The older the youth, the greater role they should play in this process. For new clubs, some advance planning will need to be done by the adults to determine resources available and to narrow the options for youth to consider.

During the first 4-H club needs to decide:

- How often to meet
- When and where to meet, how formal or informal they want to be in carrying out club business
- What they want to do at their club meetings
- Determine if funds are needed to run the club. If so, the club should begin to estimate the amount they will need as well as possible fundraising plans for future discussion

As a club, think about why members are involved. Plan your club program to meet the needs of the youth. An effective planning process will create a well-balanced program and provide 4-H members with opportunities for personal development. Each member should be encouraged to voice his/her interests, goals and opinions. A well-planned program will:

- Provide opportunities for each person to assume responsibility
- Include a variety of activities
- Identify the preparation needed for meetings and events
- Provide for timely communications
- Avoid calendar conflicts

While the planning method must be suitable to the characteristics of the club, an effective planning process will:

- Give each person a part in the decision
- Facilitate both cooperation and compromise
- Provide practice planning skills for members of all ages

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## **When and How Do We Plan?**

Most clubs plan their programs and elect officers in September or October. Clubs that operate only part of the year need to plan as soon as possible.

## **What Are Goals?**

Goals are simply statements of what you want to accomplish—what you want to do, what you want to learn. A goal is like a road map; it helps you decide how to get to where you want to go. Goals have three parts that allow us to measure and check our progress. They are:

1. Action—How?
2. Result—What?
3. Timetable—When?

While members will also have individual goals, club goals should reflect what is important to the group as a whole. These goals provide the foundation for the rest of the club plan. Club goals should:

- Be realistic
- Meet the needs and interests of the club members
- Promote cooperation
- Provide individual achievement opportunities
- Provide community and service participation

## **What Will You Do to Meet These Goals?**

Once the goals are agreed upon, it is important to survey all club members on how the goals are going to be met. Examples of acceptable methods of surveying include:

- Using a suggestion box
- Writing ideas on large pieces of paper taped on the walls
- Collages
- Roll Call (give ideas when name is called)
- Brainstorming

When everyone's ideas have been presented and the group is ready to discuss them, it is helpful to have these items handy:

- School calendars
- County 4-H calendar
- 4-H project lists
- Information about service-learning
- Information about field trip opportunities
- Information about community celebrations, festivals and events

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“parent nights” or “family days” during which members can “show-off” their accomplishments and parents can socialize with one another. Learn about their personal interests, hobbies and family activities. Later requests for help can then be based on the things you know they enjoy and can do well. When you need help be sure to:

- \* Ask an individual, basing your request on that person’s interests, skills and abilities. Generic calls for help don’t work!
- \* Be honest and specific about the commitment and time frame.
- \* Ask well in advance of when the job needs to be done.

· **Express your appreciation appropriately.** Regardless of how much or how little a parent has done, she/he deserves a “thank you.” Whether it is delivered in the form of a phone call, a hand-written note or public recognition, that may include a certificate or small gift, will depend on what was done and the person’s personality— one size does not fit all!

### **Involve Youth Leaders**

Youth Leaders are 4-H teens that partner with adults to provide leadership for 4-H clubs and countywide 4-H activities. Depending on his or her age and experience, a youth leader can serve as general assistant, teach a project, mentor individual members, coordinate activities or assume almost any other 4-H leadership role under supervision of an adult. Involving youth leaders in your club not only “lightens the load” for you; it also adds sparks of energy and enthusiasm, provides role models for your members and provides teens with valuable opportunity to practice their leadership skills.

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## **Structuring the 4-H Club Meeting: What should 4-H Club Meetings Look?**

The design of your club is completely up to the youth members involved. Club gatherings can look however you would like, as long as they involve the key club meeting components. The way club meetings are structured depends largely on the size of the group and the age of the members. Remember to keep the meeting interesting and to change the pace of the meeting every 15 minutes or so. The average attention span for youth ranges from 10 to 20 minutes. In general, 4-H meetings are divided into four parts:

### **Key Meeting Components:**

1. **Pre-Meeting:** bridges the gap between the time members begin to arrive and the time the actual meeting begins. Activities for the pre-meeting time can include mixers, word games, puzzles, etc.
2. **Business Meeting:** members learn how to conduct a meeting and practice democratic decision-making.
3. **Educational Program:** usually project work, but may involve special presentations or activities conducted by resource people, parents or older members.
4. **Recreation/Refreshment/Social Activities:** provides members an opportunity to develop and practice social skills.

The order of these segments and the amount of time devoted to each may be varied to suit the specific activities planned, the time and place the meeting is held, etc. Here are some specific suggestions:

1. Clubs that meet right after school may want to have refreshments available as the members arrive. Quiet recreational activities such as two-person pencil and paper games can be used to keep order and foster interaction until the start of the meeting.
2. When members can't settle down and focus on the task at hand, a short, active game followed by a quiet one can release energy and get the group ready for more "serious business."
3. While Cloverbud groups do not conduct business meetings, starting each meeting with the same opening ritual establishes a structured routine that is important for this age group. Use of a closing ritual is also recommended. Members can be assigned "officers of the day" to help conduct these rituals.

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4. The timing of meeting segments must relate to both the attention span of the age group and the nature of the activities planned.
5. Sharing club leadership with your members is important. It makes your job easier and it develops life skills for the members.
6. Beyond the four segments there are many little things you can do to make your 4-H club meeting fun and educational. Contact your local 4-H office for ideas.

Be sure to focus on parts that meet the club's needs for each meeting. Some meetings may focus more heavily on project work to help members accomplish their goals and learn new skills. Remember 4-H should be fun! Celebrate accomplishments or just take time to focus on recreation once in awhile. It's a great way to build a club team. Field trips and service-learning, etc. can put spice into your club, providing opportunities for youth to plan and organize while having fun.

### **Sample 4-H Club Meeting Agenda:**

1. Snack & Chat (15 minutes before starting meeting)
2. Business Meeting (20- 30 Minutes)
  - Call to Order: President
  - Pledges:
    - Pledge of Allegiance
    - 4-H Pledge
  - Roll Call: Secretary
  - Introduction of Visitors: Vice President
  - Secretary' minutes: Secretary
    - Approval of Previous Minutes: Whole group
  - Treasurer's report: Treasurer
  - Committee Reports: Chairperson(s)
  - Old Business
  - New Business
  - Announcements
3. Enrichment (30 minutes, Organized by Vice President, if age appropriate. Program conducted by youth members)
  - Presentation of topic to group
  - Project Report (plan or progress)
  - Educational program
4. Closing social opportunity

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**Club Meeting Plan:**

Within each section of the club meeting, there is a suggested sequence of activities that can reinforce and enhance the learning experiences provided by the program.

<b>Business Meeting Component</b>	Call to Order	"The meeting of the 4-H Club will please come to order"
	Opening Ceremony	"We will now have the pledges and the thought for the day." Vice President or another 4-H member leads pledge to the American Flag, the 4-H Pledge, and thought for the day.
	Call for Minutes	"The secretary will now read the minutes of the last meeting." Secretary reads minutes.
	Approval of Minutes	"Are there any additions or corrections to the minutes (pause for additions/ corrections) ...If not, they stand approved as read."
	Call for Treasurers Report	"The treasurer will now read minutes of the last meeting." Treasurer reads report.
	Introduction of Visitors	"Our vice President (or reporter) will now introduce our visitors."
	Roll Call	"Will the secretary please take the roll?" Secretary takes roll
	Committee Reports	"We will now have committee reports. Will the chairman of the Committee please report?"
	Old Business	"Is there any old business that needs to be discussed?" (Allow time for discussion and voting if necessary) "Is there any further old business?"
	New Business	"Is there any new business that needs to be discussed?" (Allow time for discussion and voting if necessary) "Is there any further new business?"
	Announcements	"Are there any announcements?" Leaders, agents, or members may have announcements
<b>Enrichment Component</b>	Introduce Program Chair (VP)	"I will now turn the meeting over to (name) to introduce our program"
	Thank Program Participants	Vice president introduces program participants
<b>Recreation</b>	Introduce Recreation Leaders	"Thank you for presenting such an interesting program."
<b>Adjournment</b>	Close Meeting	Recreation leader leads an activity, game or song.
		"Our next meeting will be (insert date) at (insert time). Is there a motion that we adjourn?"
		"The meeting is adjourned"

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Everyone should be allowed to ask questions and voice his or her opinion about the plan. Conflicts in schedules and other concerns can be addressed at this time. After the plan has been discussed and revised as needed, members should vote to approve and adopt it as their yearly 4-H program. Prior to adopting a plan all participants should be able to say "yes" to the following questions:

- Does the program involve all members?
- Is the program interesting to all ages?
- Is the plan realistic?
- Does the plan include activities for learning and service and just for fun?
- Did you consider county 4-H events?
- Is someone responsible for each task?

### **How Do We Ensure that the Plan is Successful?**

Follow-up and periodic assessments are key! Be sure to provide each family with detailed information on club meetings, dates, times, locations, and agenda items. Consider calling club members to encourage their involvement. Club newsletters are a great way to get the word out to not only the club, but the community as well!

### **What If the Plan Isn't Working?**

If the plan isn't working, it is completely appropriate to make changes. You may spot lagging interest, more pressing needs or opportunities. The club should review the progress, and if necessary, amend the club plan. Be sure to keep your local 4-H professional in the loop, as there may be additional resources available to help form your program.

### **Evaluating the Clubs Progress**

After the group has been meeting for four to six months, take a close look at how things are going. Informal club surveys should be used with club leaders, members, and parents mid-way through the club year (February/March) to gain their perspective on club meetings and experiences, inform plans for improvement, and/or reinforce what the club is currently working towards.

### **Club Meetings are part of the Community**

Remember that the club is larger than just the youth that attend each meeting. There are a number of additional supports and resources that should be used to help the club work and function throughout the community. By involving club member's parents or possibly enlisting the help of older youth in the community, not only is the workload shared, but you create opportunities for additional individuals to become engaged in the world of 4-H.

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## **Involve the Parents**

Everyone benefits when parents are involved in the 4-H club program:

- **4-H members** need their parents' support and encouragement to attend meetings, complete projects and fulfill responsibilities to the club
- **Parents** have an opportunity to spend time with their children and enjoy activities together. In many ways, 4-H is a "partner in parenting"
- **4-H leaders** have a lot to juggle. Being able to delegate some of those responsibilities, even the smallest ones, can be a big help
- **The community** benefits when families support community-minded organizations like 4-H.

Involved families are more knowledgeable about community issues and therefore more likely to support community efforts as well. Keep these benefits in mind when you invite parents to become involved. Here are some suggestions on how, when and whom you ask.

- **Meet with parents at the beginning of each year.** This parent meeting may take place before, after or as part of the club's planning meeting. While members should make the final decision about their projects and activities, it is important to know early in the year the ways in which parents can support the club program. Consider using the interest survey and/or activity sign-up sheet to encourage commitment and to keep track of everyone's interests and availability.

- **Maintain good communication.** In order for parents to feel like a part of the group and that they share responsibility for its success, they must be kept informed about the "when, where and whys" of both the club's activities and the 4-H club program in general. Some ways you can stay connected with parents are:

- \* Ask parents to assist at club meetings on a rotating basis. You may even want to meet in the members' homes on a rotating basis.
- \* Encourage members to ask their parents for help when working on projects at home.
- \* Send information sheets home with members prior to special activities such as project trainings.
- \* Make time to chat with parents whenever they bring their child to an activity.

- **Create opportunities to get to know parents better.** For example, hold

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