

Tips for 4-H Meetings

- Try to assess the needs of club members when planning and conducting meetings, and keep the format flexible. What are their interests? Also, be culturally and socially inclusive—have kids with different customs and different faiths share their holidays.
- A "touchy-feely" box is a good method for involving all the club members and getting things rolling. Without looking in the box, one child tries to identify an object by feel, and then gives clues to the rest of the group so that they can guess the object too. What's in the box can relate to the theme of the meeting or program.
- Choose themes in advance for upcoming meetings. The farther ahead you plan, the more luxury you, parents, and members have to collect interesting materials and information and take advantage of seasonal opportunities and community events. For example, for a January meeting, a horticultural club established a theme: Things That Fly. The topic was birds, and the members made suet feeders. They also mixed suet and took home a recipe so they could replenish their supply on their own.
- Keep records of what you do at meetings so you won't repeat material to the same child or group down the road.
- Give members something to take home with them whether it's a small token or something they made, built, or planted. It's exciting, and it gives them something to extend the lesson or activity at home.
- Don't skip the goodies! Some people think meetings are too short to bother with refreshments. But it's amazing what a little snack can do for morale. It's a good way of bringing the meeting to a close, and allowing members to take turns helping, and the kids always look forward to it. If your meeting had a particular emphasis or special program, align with the theme. (For example, if apples were the theme, serve apple spice cake.)
- Because new kids may arrive each month, you may often be bridging the gap between more "sophisticated" club members and "newbies." Partnering members for activities is a good way to encourage cooperation without boring experienced members or overwhelming new ones.
- Community projects are inspiring, fun, and rewarding. Here are a couple of examples: a leader who runs a club in an underprivileged neighborhood has members who run a community closet for clothing and food donations; members of a horticultural club take surplus vegetables to a local soup kitchen.
- Find out any special talents or expertise parents may have. Do they cook? Do they work with animals, garden, or play instrument? Do they work for or have access to a museum, botanical garden, or theater?
- Encourage members/parents to learn more about a subject that interests them and share a resulting activity with the group. For example, a member and parent might attend a craft class at an arts and craft supply store and pass along their know-how in a group sharing activity.

*Source: North Carolina 4-H Club Program Leader Lessons, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service
<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fourh/clubs/Index/home.htm>*

Room to Improve Your 4-H Club Meeting

A "good" 4-H meeting:

- Is a social experience.
- Is an opportunity to develop leadership skills.
- Makes 4-H'ers feel good about themselves.
- Helps 4-H'ers discover new ideas.

Making Meetings Fun

To get each 4-H member involved, observe who does what during the business meeting, the program, and recreation. Rather than "letting things happen," ask shy members to do something during the meeting. Some need to be encouraged while others need to be held back. Give out "warm fuzzies" to make each 4-H member feel special. Use cotton balls for "warm fuzzies" and give to deserving 4-H'ers at each meeting. Before the meeting, decide who needs a "warm fuzzy" and when to give it. Group activities make learning fun and exciting. Some strategies you might use are small group discussions, brainstorming, role-playing or games. Orient resource people before the meeting on how to involve the 4-H'ers. You could suggest a "hands on" experience, a listening team, or brainstorming to generate questions.

Your Leadership Style Counts

Leadership style is how you work with people to accomplish a goal. Place a check beside strategies you find useful:

Involvement Guilt Persuasion
 Fun Power Do Nothing

You may discover that you use several strategies depending on the situation. The "best" style is the one that is successful in getting results with each individual and each group.

4-H Meeting Checklist

	Yes	No
• Did you discover one new idea?	___	___
• Did you get to speak to the group during any part of a meeting?	___	___
• Did you get to do anything with another person or persons during the meetings?	___	___
• Did you have time to talk and play with your friends?	___	___
• Did you feel good about yourself during the meetings?	___	___
• Did you understand what took place during the business part of the meetings?	___	___
• Were you involved in planning a meeting?	___	___
• Did you learn anything you will practice at home?	___	___
• Do you like to come to 4-H meetings?	___	___
• Would you describe your meetings as: (circle one) Exciting Interesting Dull Boring		
• Is there anything else you want to say?		

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Troubleshooting 4-H Club Problems

Lack of Participation - Members do not participate in group activities

- Members may not be interested in the program or understand the goals or the goals are inappropriate for members' age, needs or interests.
- Involve all members in setting goals and in planning the programs and activities.
- Keep lines of communication open.
- Members may feel insecure
- Let younger, inexperienced members serve on a committee where they can gain experience before giving a big assignment.
- Give each member responsibility for at least one important task.
- Promote a friendly, helpful group spirit – no one laughs or ridicules a person who “goofs.”
- More aggressive members may not give others a chance to participate.
- Develop a group goal that “everyone participates.”
- Members may not know how to participate.
- Teach members how to perform the role or assignment if they don't know how.
- Meeting schedule may be in conflict with other activities/commitments.
- Change meeting time to meet needs of group.
- Members may be forgetful.
- Distribute club calendars to all members.
- Use reminder phone calls (can be assigned to a member or parent).

Declining Membership – Members are dropping out; the group does not attract new members.

- Present members may be cliquish and fail to welcome prospective or new members.
- Strive to improve atmosphere – make it warmer, more friendly.
- Help cliquish members to recognize the result of their behavior and to work at making all members feel liked and wanted.
- Give newer members responsibilities so they will have a role in the organization and feel important to the group.
- Recognize members for what they do.
- Make a list of prospective members and extend friendly, personal invitations.
- Invite prospects to go to a meeting with you.
- The program may not be of interest to current or prospective members.
- Make sure present and prospective members understand the purposes of the group.
- Publicize the program and activities.
- Some members or prospective members may not have a way to get to meetings.
- Arrange car pools.

Disorderly Meetings – Meetings are disorganized or plagued by interruptions.

- The group has fallen into bad habits.
- Discuss problems openly with members, but without placing blame. What standards do they want?
- See the problems described above; any of these could cause disorderly meetings.
- Review responsibilities of club officers and reinforce procedures.
- Members are coming late.
- Change the meeting time.
- Open with the most attractive parts of the program.
- Run recreational activities as members arrive.
- Members may not know what is expected.
- Encourage members to state their expectations.
- Meetings are not appropriately structured or are not well planned.

Lack of Interest in the Educational Program – Members only attend the social functions.

- Members do not identify their personal goals with those of the program.
- Involve members in setting group goals.
- Members may not have had a large enough role in planning the program.
- Work in close partnership with members to plan the programs they want.
- Members may not find a satisfying role in carrying out the programs.
- Ensure that all members have challenging responsibilities that they can carry out.
- Recognize members for their contributions.

Poor Group Relationships – There is bickering among members; members feel that adults dominate.

- Individuals may not understand their own motivation or that of others.
- Discuss basic motivations – why people act as they do.
- Work to develop mutual understanding and trust among members and between members and leaders; when a statement or behavior is inappropriate, ask, don't assume you know the reason behind it.
- Individuals cannot distinguish between differences in ideas and differences in personalities.
- Accept members as they are; don't make your approval and acceptance dependent upon their behavior.
- Help members to focus on what is being said, rather than who is saying it.
- Focus on contribution and appreciation. "Your contribution counts." "We appreciate what you have done."
- Individuals may feel insecure and therefore are excessively shy or aggressive.
- Build self-confidence and feelings of worth by focusing on each member's assets and strengths. "I like the way you handled that." "I appreciate what you did."
- Let the members know their worth. Recognize improvement and effort, not just accomplishment.
- Encourage cooperation rather than competition.
- Focus on the member's ability to manage his or her life and make decisions. Do not anticipate failure. "I trust you to become responsible and independent."

Lack of Parental Support

- Parents don't know what 4-H is all about and/or don't get timely information about activities.
- Use a club newsheet.
- Hold parents meetings.
- Involve the entire family in the program planning process.
- Parents don't have a role in the club meeting; they have been left out except for chores.
- Discover what parents are willing to contribute and then ask them.
- Create parent committees that meet at the same time the club meets.
- Create job descriptions and ask directly for specific leadership roles.
- Parents don't understand the developmental needs of their children.
- Talk with parents about how specific 4-H projects and activities contribute to their children's development.
- Inform parents about ways they can contribute to their child's success.
- Parents have not been recognized or given credit for the work they've done.
- Thank parents when you see them; call them when they've done a bit extra.
- Hold a parent's appreciation and recognition night.

Proactive Group Management Strategies

- Do, but don't make too big a deal out of control.
- Have everyone's complete attention. Maintain active listening through intent eye contact.
- Expect the best. Very clearly define a high standard for acceptable behavior.
- Create a safe and worry free environment.
- Show interest in child's activities. Relate to your group through examples of interest to them.
- Have a bag tricks, not relying on any one method, and improvise when needed.
- Encourage self-control by providing meaningful choices.
- Have as many members of the group as active as possible.
- Build children's images of themselves as trustworthy, responsible, and cooperative.
- Give clear directions one at a time.
- As you discipline kids, see them as calling for your help.
- How you discipline may be even-tempered, firm, and in many situations, playful. Don't take disruptive behavior personally.
- Discipline must be immediate, not delayed, and be a natural or logical consequence, in order to have a significant effect on future behavior.
- Focus on desired behavior, rather than the one to be avoided.
- Model the behavior you want most.
- Say "yes" whenever possible.

Positive Talk

When a child makes a decision that is outside group boundaries, you have to give immediate, clear feedback. The words you use frame the whole experience for your group and your relationship with them. Using positive language sets a positive tone and lets the child know what you want them to do.

Instead of Saying:

Please don't throw the sand!
Quit bothering and pushing him.

Say:

Please leave the sand alone.
Keep your hands to yourself.

In the first statement, the last thing the young person hears is *throw the sand* and *pushing him*. Stating instructions in a negative almost tells kids to do the negative behavior—especially if there's any noise competing with your voice. What the child is likely to hear and remember is your last words. Pay attention to the good things the kids are doing. Increase your playfulness at the same time and watch your days go by faster and happier. Catch them doing something good!

A Do-Able Discipline Process

Validate the child and their feelings. *It looks like you're feeling angry or frustrated right now. Pause. That's okay. Hey, I feel angry and frustrated sometimes too. Everybody does. It's okay to feel that way sometimes.*

Identify, if possible, what's really going on as specifically as you can. *So, can I ask you a question? Pause, if yes, continue. What's been happening to you to make you feel angry?* Identifying the immediate cause (they keep calling me names) and the underlying cause (verbal abuse at home by a bigger sibling), will impact the next step.

Empower the child toward a solution though facilitation if possible, rather than your immediate direction. *Next time, instead of becoming frustrated or angry, hitting them, and then leaving the room without permission, what choice or what else do you think might work better for you, me, and for the others in the group?* Then wait. Allow time for a reply. It's amazing what they come up with when given time. Now you've encouraged self-reflection and growth. After a period of waiting, you may want to offer possible choices. Finally, you always have the option to ask for what you want from the child.

Why Do Children Act Out?

Child's Goal	Attention	Power	Revenge	Inadequacy
Child's Belief	<i>I belong when I am being noticed</i>	<i>I belong when I am in control</i>	<i>I belong only by hurting others instead of being</i>	<i>I belong only by convincing others not to expect anything</i>

Leader's Feeling	Annoyed	Angry, provoked, as if one's authority is threatened	<i>hurt</i> Deeply hurt	<i>from me. I am helpless.</i> Despair, hopelessness, give up
Reaction Tendency	Remind, coax	Fight, give in	Retaliate, get even	Agree with child
Reaction Solutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ignore misbehavior when possible 2. Give attention to positive behavior when child is not making a bid for it. 3. Avoid undue service. Realize that reminding, punishing, rewarding and coaxing are undue attention. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Withdraw from conflict. 2. Help child see how to use power constructively by appealing for child's help and enlisting cooperation. 3. Realize that fighting or giving in only increase a child's desire for power. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Avoid feeling hurt. 2. Avoid punishment and retaliation. 3. Build strong, trusting relationships. 4. Convince the child that s/he is loved. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stop all criticism. 2. Encourage any positive attempt, no matter how small. 3. Focus on assets. 4. Above all, don't be hooked into pity, and don't give up.

Ways to Say "Good for You"

Being positive is a good teaching technique. If you believe your members "can" they will think so too. If your members believe they "can" they "will." Emphasize the positive.

- ☺ You really out-did yourself today.
- ☺ This kind of work pleases me very much.
- ☺ Congratulations!
- ☺ That's right. Good for you.
- ☺ Terrific.
- ☺ I bet your Mom (Dad) would be proud to see the job you did on this.
- ☺ Beautiful.
- ☺ Good job.
- ☺ Excellent work.
- ☺ I appreciate your help.
- ☺ Very good. Will you show the group?
- ☺ Thank you for (sitting down, being quiet, getting right to work, etc.)
- ☺ That's an interesting point of view.
- ☺ You've got it now.
- ☺ Nice going.
- ☺ Marvelous.
- ☺ You're on the right track now.
- ☺ That's top quality work.
- ☺ That's really nice.
- ☺ Thank you very much.
- ☺ That's an interesting way of looking at it.
- ☺ I like the way the group has settled down.
- ☺ Keep it up.
- ☺ Wow!
- ☺ That's great.
- ☺ I like the way you're working.
- ☺ Keep up the good work.
- ☺ I'm very proud of the way you worked (are working) today.
- ☺ Everyone's working so hard.
- ☺ That's quite an improvement.
- ☺ Much better.
- ☺ It's a pleasure to be with you.
- ☺ What neat work.
- ☺ That looks like it's going to be a great (report, project, talk, exhibit, etc.)
- ☺ It looks like you put a lot of work into this.
- ☺ That's clever.
- ☺ Very creative.
- ☺ Very interesting.
- ☺ Good thinking.
- ☺ Now you've figured it out.
- ☺ That's a good point.
- ☺ That's a very good observation.
- ☺ That certainly is one way of looking at it.
- ☺ That's coming along nicely