

TEACHING RECORD KEEPING

(University of Nebraska)

If record keeping is to be a valuable experience for 4-H'ers, they need to understand how records can help them. Youth will respond to those things that have immediate use and meaning, and will do what is important to them.

* **Start the record early.**

Record keeping should be discussed at one of the first meetings. Each 4-H'er must have appropriate records for their projects. Many of the record forms incorporate a planning or goal setting section. This should be completed before the project is started. This includes plans for using the records as part of the overall learning experience. Record keeping should be simple and meaningful, not busy work.

* **Let parents know.**

Parents should be invited to the meeting when you explain records. If they understand the purpose and importance, they will be more inclined to help. Remind parents that 4-H'ers learn by doing for themselves and that parents must provide a supporting role.

* **Encourage taking pictures.**

Encourage parents to take pictures of 4-H'ers participating in projects and activities. They are a valuable addition to the records as an example and explain how it has benefited them.

* **Demonstrate record keeping**

A sample record can be used to show members and parents how to complete their records. Older 4-H'ers can be asked to share past records as an example and explain how it has benefited them.

* **Use teen leaders.**

Most teen leaders are interested in helping younger members. Helping 4-H'ers with record keeping is an excellent leadership experience. A teen leader may be assigned to help one or more individuals. Be ready to assist if necessary, but do not take the responsibility away from the teen leader.

* **Review records periodically.**

A review of records should be part of several meetings throughout the year. This will help 4-H'ers keep their records up-to-date and evaluate project progress. Junior leaders and parents can be paired with individuals for record reviews.

* **Keep record keeping in perspective.**

Keeping records is one part of the total 4-H experience. Record keeping will be easier for some 4-H'ers than others, but all should be encouraged to take pride in their records. Neatness is important but evidence of use is no reason to re-copy records. Clean, but unused records are helping no one.

* **Be enthusiastic.**

Your attitude will influence how 4-H'ers feel about keeping records. They will be interested if you help them see their progress and stimulate self-improvement.

* **Recognize record-keeping efforts.**

Recognition should be given for progress and improvement. 4-H'ers should be recognized for records that are complete, on time, and used by the members to evaluate their own growth and development. A word of praise, a pat on the back, a gold stick-on star, or a friendly smile will show how you value their effort.

* **Encourage safe storage of records.**

A three-ring loose-leaf binder or a binder with an Acco-Type fastener can be used to keep all records together.

4-H records can provide an accurate summary of growth and development during a 4-H career. They can provide a valuable reference for information needed to complete applications for 4-H awards, college, or jobs.

