

## SO - YOU'RE THE EVALUATOR

You have been selected to evaluate exhibits at the Tompkins County 4-H Youth Fair because of your special knowledge and skill in a specific area. Combined with the knowledge of youth development principles, you can provide a very positive learning experience for the 4-H'ers. Thank you for your help.

### The Role of Evaluators

Evaluators are under pressure and need to be given specific criteria for whatever they are being asked to critique. They also need to know how to work with and talk with children.

Youth need to know that evaluators are human beings, too, and that evaluating includes subjective, as well as objective observations. They need to know the evaluating standards for their project before the actual event.

Above all, "The judge must recognize that the process is more important than the product and that the doing is more important than the thing done."

~Margaret Wylie, This Business of Judging - REFERENCE

### Evaluator - A Method of Teaching

Evaluating should be an educational experience that relates to the concept that 4-H is non-formal education. It should:

- *Teach standards of excellence*
- *Help youth set their own standards*
- *Motivate improvement*
- *Teach where and how to make improvements*

When something is evaluated, a comparison to a standard is made and reasons given about a particular award. Through evaluating, 4-H'ers can learn how to:

- Recognize good points and areas for improvement in products or workmanship
- Make their own decisions
- Express themselves
- Accept criticism
- Sharpen their judgment skills
- Improve critical thinking skills

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### **The Danish System**

The Danish System of evaluating is used at many 4-H events. Each item is evaluated according to a standard (set of criteria) rather than against each other. 4-H leaders, members and parents should know the criteria by reviewing the Fairbook. There is no limit to the number of entries that receive each level of award (blue, red or white).

**Blue or Excellent** – The workmanship shows little need for improvement compared to the relative standard.

**Red or Good** – The workmanship is satisfactory or average but there are definite areas for improvement, even considering the age and challenges of the child.

**White or Worthy** – The workmanship shows that a worthy effort has been made and that the finished product is useable for the purpose intended. However, there is much need for improvement even considering the age and challenges of the child.

### **If You Are the Evaluator:**

- Smile! The kids are nervous enough already and need to see a friendly face!
- Talk with the child, not at them.
- Remember that children the same age have different abilities.
- Know the evaluation standards or criteria and follow them.
- Never agree to evaluate an area where you are not qualified.
- Be consistent.
- Try not to allow personal biases to influence your decisions or comments.
- Emphasize positive aspects before making any criticisms.
- Offer a way to correct any problems you find and how to avoid it the next time.
- Do not pre-judge an entry because of the reputation of the competitor or club.
- Use only constructive comments, e.g., if a 4-H member makes an apron out of inappropriate fabric, say “an apron needs to be made from fabric that can be washed and dried many times” instead of “you used the wrong fabric for an apron.”
- Be sure your comments justify the award you are giving.
- Keep in mind that there is often more than one way to do something.

4-H staff, key volunteers, teen superintendents, youth stewards and assistants will be available to help you.

**Again, thank you.**

