

4-H Volunteer Leaders' Series

Leading a Project Group

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Your Role

As a project leader, you have an excellent opportunity to help young people grow and develop in a rapidly changing world. The most important qualities you bring to your job as a 4-H leader are:

- A strong belief in the basic worth of each individual as a human being.
- A commitment to the personal development of each individual.
- The ability to relate to children, parents and other volunteers.
- An understanding that leadership can be fulfilling for both adults and youth.

Your leadership is critical to the success of the 4-H program. Young people need relationships with adults who will recognize their need for good feelings about themselves and their need to develop meaningful relationships with other youth and adults. The young people also need to acquire subject-matter knowledge, physical skills, decision-making abilities and wholesome attitudes toward self and others (life skills).

Your success as a leader does not depend on blue ribbons or the number of fair exhibits. The good things that happen through the 4-H program will be visible in the young people themselves – and in you. Do the young people feel good about themselves and the things they have done? Have they improved in relating to

other young people and adults? Did you, the leader, enjoy working with the boys and girls? Is it fun?

Your Reward

The single most important quality you bring to the job of a 4-H leader is that you care about young people and you are willing to give your time and knowledge to help each young person develop to his or her greatest potential.

During your time as a leader, you will surely see many “things” created or planned – cookies, chickens, engines, garments or gardens. The quality of the finished product will always be secondary to how the young people – and you – have grown, because you will grow along with the members. We hope the experience will be a positive and satisfying one for all.

Enjoy yourself and let the young people know it!

Your Responsibilities

Guide Project Selection –
During the 4-H club organizational meeting, give a presentation concerning your project group. Include the activities in which the group will be involved, materials needed, etc.

Allow parents and 4-H'ers to ask questions that will help them select the appropriate project group. If CES641, *Pick-A-Project*, has not already been used, you may wish to use it with 4-H'ers at this time. This activity is designed to determine the projects a 4-H'er would enjoy.



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Organizing the Group – First, obtain member manuals and leader guides for your project from the county Extension office or your club leader. With the members, determine the time and place of the project meetings, which can start any time after enrollment is complete. Most leaders plan to complete project work in time to submit 4-H journals for judging. You may also want to plan your project work to coordinate with county project activities such as fashion revue or the county fair. If your group is a single-project club, you may decide to elect officers who will conduct any necessary business meetings.

Encouraging and Motivating Members – Ribbons and awards are only one type of reward. There are many other important ways for you to encourage good project work and contribute to the personal development of each young person. Be sensitive to the feelings of each member. See that each member feels comfortable and accepted. Provide some time to work with each young person as an individual. Help the member learn to evaluate personal progress.

Involving Parents – Invite parents to attend the first project meeting. Encourage them to help their children decide how much time and money is reasonable for the project. Parents can be a big help with the project work that is done at home.

Involve Members in Planning – As much as possible, involve your members in planning the program. Young people will have a greater commitment to the program if they have been involved in the planning. CES650, *4-H Project Meeting Planning Outline*, may be helpful as you plan your meetings. A simple record of the meetings will help you plan for the future. The number of meetings will depend on the type of project and the goals of the young people.

Journals – Each 4-H member will have a project book. Some leaders find it easier to keep these books and hand them out as needed at project meetings. Completed books should be used as a reference in filling out the Arkansas 4-H Journal. This form along with the 4-H'er's story and project pictures should be submitted to the club leader.

Setting Goals – Members determine their own goals for the project. However, this needs to be done with consideration for the group and the individual's abilities. As a leader, you will need to guide the member in setting goals. CES639, *Arkansas 4-H Yearly Project Plan*, is an excellent guide for planning the direction a 4-H'er would like to take in his/her project.

Teaching Skills – Successful 4-H work depends on involving the boys and girls in the doing aspect of learning. You will want to use a variety of teaching techniques to involve the members. Be sure to read 4HCJ2, *Teaching Techniques*.

Resource/Support Volunteers – From time to time, your group will benefit from having other people involved as resource persons. As leader, you will identify and recruit these persons as necessary. Remind these individuals their commitment is for a very limited time and for a specific purpose.

Participating in 4-H Activities – A 4-H member who actively participates in project meetings and other club activities usually maintains greater interest.

Teaching Session

The major part of the meeting will involve a teaching session which may include review, new material and “doing” experiences for the members.

Progress Reports and Demonstrations or Talks – Progress reports give leaders an opportunity to check on the work each member has done since the last meeting. If members have encountered difficulties, they can be discussed. They are also an excellent opportunity for 4-H'ers to report a “talk” in their 4-H journal. After progress reports are given, 4-H members present demonstrations or illustrated talks assigned at the last project meeting.

Review of Last Meeting – This will help members have a common starting place for the meeting and lead into new information.

New Project Information – You, the leader, should rely heavily on showing as well as telling how to do something. Use a variety of methods to put your ideas across. (See 4HCJ2, *Teaching Techniques*.)

Activity Period – In many projects, members do most of their project work at home. Try to include learning activities which will stimulate interest and provide variety. Members might:

- Work on project activities.
- Participate in judging experiences (see 4HCJ5, *Sharpen Your Judgment*).
- Take a tour or field trip.
- Participate in a discussion group.
- Make exhibits.
- Plan or practice demonstrations (see 4HCJ3, *Demonstrations and Presentations*).
- Bring records up to date.

Give assignments for the next meeting, taking into consideration the members' age levels, abilities and interests. Plan to involve all the young people in some way.

Business Session

Sometimes you will need to plan time to discuss business. In a single-project club, regular business meetings should be scheduled.

If your project group is part of a larger club, you will need to discuss the time and place of the next club meeting and the members' participation in the club meeting and other events.

The First Project Meeting

Plan carefully for your first project meeting. This may be your first contact with the members. Good beginnings are important and will pay off in high interest. CES650, *4-H Project Meeting Planning Outline*, and the "Project Meeting Checklist" below should be helpful.

As members arrive, hand out literature and allow them to look it over. If members do not know each other, consider some simple way to introduce everyone. There are several fun ways to do this.

Present an interesting preview of the project work. You might present a demonstration, have an

older, more experienced 4-H member tell about the project or have the members work at some simple activity.

Explain the project book and goal-setting process. CES639, *Arkansas 4-H Yearly Project Plan*, is an excellent way for 4-H'ers to plan a well-rounded project. It may be appropriate, especially with younger members, to finalize each member's goals at the second meeting after the young people are more familiar with the project and they have discussed it at home. Make goal setting a joint venture of the member, parent and you, the leader.

There will be some business issues to be settled, such as finalizing the time and place of remaining meetings. Also, each member is responsible for his personal project expenses. Cost of supplies for the meetings can be shared by members, or you might want to have a fund-raising project to cover expenses.

Give members an opportunity, based on their ages and experience, to plan the remaining programs. Make assignments for the next meeting.

Younger members, especially, need some informal time. This might include a game or snack which was made during the meeting.

Project Meeting Checklist – After the meeting, take a few minutes to consider each of the following questions. Try to build these ideas into each program! This checklist should help you use CES650, *4-H Project Meeting Planning Outline*.

Project Meeting Checklist						
	Meetings					
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
1. Were the objectives of the meeting clear?						
2. Did I give each member a chance to actively participate?						
3. Did I praise or encourage each person in some way?						
4. Did I plan for differences in abilities and interests of youth?						
5. Did I plan for age level differences?						
6. Did I involve the parents in some way?						
7. Did I give members a chance to assume responsibility when it was appropriate?						
8. And most important – Did I enjoy working with the young people?						

Help for You – the Leader

4-H Literature

- Helper's Guide for your project
- County 4-H Newsletter

Project Coordinator – If your county has a volunteer serving in this position, he or she will be available to assist and train you in subject matter and in the organization and management of 4-H project clubs and groups.

Organizational Leader – If you are a member of a multi-project club, the organizational leader is one of the first people to contact for information and help.

Journal Leader – In many multi-project clubs, there will be a member of the club leadership team who is responsible for training 4-H members, parents

and yourself in proper 4-H project record keeping and journal procedures.

County Extension Office – If you are part of a single-project club or a special-interest group, the Extension agents in your county Extension office will be a major resource for you.

Leader Training Sessions – These may be organized through a club or the county Extension office. These meetings give leaders an opportunity to learn from each other and share ideas.

Teen Leaders – In most project groups, teen leaders will be a valuable addition. Contact your club organizational leader for information on how to obtain a teen leader for your group.

Resource/Support Volunteer – Parents and other community members are often very willing to share their skills and time with the young people.

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