

Observer's Checklist

Watch the person who's doing the listening. At the end of the exercise use the following checklist to record your observations. Use an asterisk (*) to mark those behaviors you noticed, and a minus sign (-) for things the listener didn't appear to do.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The listener faced the speaker. | <input type="checkbox"/> The listener avoided criticizing or objecting to what was being said. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The listener made eye contact with the speaker. | <input type="checkbox"/> The listener resisted the temptation to give advice. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The listener appeared to be interested in what was being said. | <input type="checkbox"/> The listener waited for a natural break in the conversation if he or she didn't understand what was being said or needed to get an example. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The listener smiled and used appropriate facial expressions. | <input type="checkbox"/> The listener used his or her own words to briefly repeat what had been said, and asked if that was what the speaker had intended. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The listener used a warm and pleasant tone of voice to encourage the speaker to keep talking (saying things like "Mm-hmmm," "Uh huh," "Right," "I see," etc.). | |

Additional observations:

Talking Topics

Choose the topic that sounds most interesting to you.
When it's your turn to be the speaker, tell the listener as much as you can about it.

- Talk about one or two of your earliest childhood memories and why they're memorable.**

Perhaps they involve a special toy you enjoyed playing with, or someone who made you feel especially happy (or sad). They might have to do with a fear you had as a child or something that made a lasting impression on you.

- Describe a special possession that you would hate to lose (or have destroyed or stolen).**

Perhaps it's a cherished family souvenir or something that has great sentimental value. Or maybe it's an item you use everyday and couldn't easily replace. Describe why it's so important to you and what you would feel like if you didn't have it anymore.

- Tell about a secret dream or something you would love to be able to do sometime during your lifetime.**

It might have to do with traveling somewhere exciting or perhaps you have always wanted to accomplish or learn something out of the ordinary. Maybe there's a famous person you are dying to meet someday. Explain what it is and why you dream about doing it someday.

- Describe your thoughts about the most important things people need to live a happy life.**

Think about some of the things that really matter in life and what people can do to achieve those things. Explain what you think it means to live your life really well and what can get in the way of doing it.

- Describe your opinions about some of the biggest problems in our society these days.**

Go ahead and be a little bit critical about what's going on in the world around us. What kinds of things bother you or scare you or anger you when you pick up a newspaper or watch the evening news? And what ought to be done about these things?

How Did It Feel?

Age

Older youth and adults

Teaching context

Use this activity anytime you are training adult and older youth volunteers for roles in which they will need to listen and respond to what other people are telling them. Counselor training, chaperone orientation, and face-to-face judging are just a few examples.

Time needed

20–30 minutes

Description

This activity provides an opportunity for people to experience what it feels like to share their feelings with someone who listens.

Advance preparation

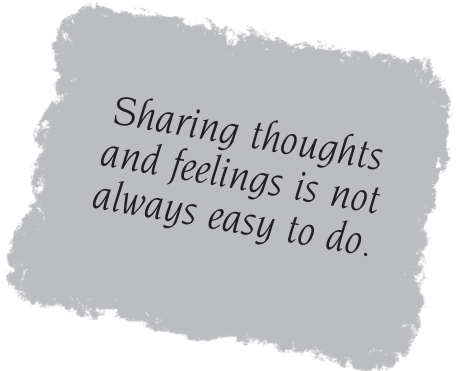
1. Copy the following statements onto a piece of flip chart paper. (You may prefer typing the statements onto a single sheet of paper that can be duplicated and distributed to each person.)
 - Describe something especially enjoyable that happened recently and how you felt about the experience.
 - Tell about the loss of someone or something that meant a lot to you and describe what it felt like to go through the experience.
 - Share something embarrassing or frustrating that happened to you and how you felt about it at the time.
 - Tell about an adult who was very special to you when you were a child and describe how you felt about that person.
 - Share something you feel especially good about having accomplished and why you feel that way.
 - Describe a time you were treated unfairly or a situation where you were misunderstood and what it felt like to be treated that way.
 - Share something that is causing you a fair amount of stress these days and describe your reactions to it.

Directions

1. Point out that relating to other people on a one-to-one basis means sharing thoughts and feelings. But that's not always easy to do. It's even more difficult when it seems the other person isn't really interested in listening to what we have to say.
2. Explain that this activity is intended to give people a chance to practice sharing what's on their minds as well as listening to another person do the same thing.
3. Have people find a partner. Then put up the flip chart paper or distribute individual copies to each pair. Explain that everyone will have a chance to choose one of the statements to talk about with his or her partner for five minutes.
4. Emphasize how important it is to be the listener. Explain that when it's your turn to listen, your job will be to encourage the other person to keep talking. It will mean really paying attention to what's being said rather than jumping in to mention something you'd like to point out.
5. Before beginning, allow a few moments for people to look over the list of statements so they can choose the one they want to talk about when it's their turn.
6. Tell the couples to decide who is going to be the talker and the listener for the first round of discussion. Give the signal to start and after five minutes tell everyone to stop. Have the couples switch roles for the next five minutes.

Follow-up Discussion

1. Ask the group the following questions about their reaction to the exercise:
 - What did it feel like to be the one doing the talking?
 - What did it feel like to do the listening?
 - Which was easiest—talking or listening? Why?
 - How did it feel to know you could count on the other person to listen?
 - What difficulties did you have trying to describe your feelings and experiences?
 - What did your partner do to encourage you to keep talking?
2. Ask the group to describe some things they learned from this exercise that will be important to keep in mind as they interact on a one-to-one basis with other people.



*Sharing thoughts
and feelings is not
always easy to do.*

Sum it up.

End by reminding everyone that there are times when we need to be able to tell other people about experiences and feelings. Sometimes it can be difficult or scary trying to find the words to say what we want to say. That's why we need to be able to trust the other person and depend on him or her to really listen to whatever it is we're trying to express.

Expressing Ideas Publicly

The ability to find and use the right words for expressing thoughts, feelings, ideas and opinions in public is an extremely valuable skill. In order to become effective communicators, youth need to learn what's involved in using language to express themselves creatively and appropriately. Included in this section are some resources that can help you provide these kinds of opportunities. In addition to suggestions for encouraging self-expression through creative writing and language activities, you'll also find ideas for helping youth gain more confidence speaking in public.

Hint

Be sure to use your own creativity in determining how best to adapt these resources for use with other programs you may be implementing already.

Creative Expression through Reading and Creative Writing

Putting thoughts and feelings into words is central to the communication process. Youth who have opportunities to experience the richness of our language in a variety of written and spoken forms have a head start when it comes to being able to express themselves. That's why there's so much value in activities that involve reading and creative writing.

Without going to a great deal of effort, there are a number of things 4-H agents and youth development educators can do to help promote a love of reading and writing.

Ideas for encouraging 4-H'ers who like to read

1. Review the *Crazy About Books Reading Circle* that is part of the 4-H communication curriculum. Consider looking for adult and youth volunteers to organize a countywide 4-H Book Discussion Group. It would be a great way for 4-H Bookworms to meet one another and share their love of reading.
2. Turn a couple of inches of monthly newsletter space into a "book corner." Simply invite 4-H leaders and youth to share titles of books they're currently reading and would recommend to others. Be sure to have them include a brief description about why they liked the book enough to suggest that others read it as well.
3. Turn a spare table or shelf somewhere in the Extension Office into a "book nook." Use it for "recycling" books from 4-H members by encouraging folks to drop off used books so others can read them. If it goes over well, why not set up a similar area at the county fair.

Ideas for encouraging 4-H'ers who like to write

1. Look over the Club "Coffeehouse" Party activity found in *Building Bridges—Communication Activities for 4-H Clubs*. Consider making some adaptations in order to do something similar the next time you have a countywide drama festival or public speaking event.
2. Create opportunities for 4-H'ers to share their original poetry and other creative writing with a wider audience. Ask them to read what they've written at leader banquets and other countywide 4-H events.
3. Encourage youth who enjoy writing to submit their work to you for display at the Extension Office.
4. Create a "poetry corner" in your newsletter and publish an original poem each month. (Be sure to make this opportunity available to adults as well as youth.)
5. Suggest that your youth leaders council take charge of putting together a special anthology of 4-H writing. Set a deadline for entries and invite all 4-H members in the county to participate. Let the youth leaders decide on a title for the publication, and put them in charge of the lay out and design—including the cover and any other artwork they'd like to add. See if your county leaders association would pay the up-front cost of duplication. Otherwise help youth figure out how much they would need to charge in order to recover printing costs.

Team up with your library

1. Get in touch with librarians in your area to discuss opportunities for working together on these and other activities and events to encourage reading and writing. For example, consider providing opportunities for older youth to read to pre-schoolers during after-school time and on weekends. It would be an ideal community service project for youth who love to read.
2. Keep in mind that April is National Poetry Month and most libraries and schools have something special going on. They would probably welcome an opportunity for 4-H to be involved.

The ability to use words well is a life-long gift!

Take it to the fair

1. There are a number of creative ways you can use your county fair to focus on the fun of reading. Consider having a used book drive by asking every 4-H club for contributions. (It'll be a great opportunity for people to get rid of books they no longer need.) Set up a used-book stand at the fair and donate the earnings to your leaders association.
2. Some counties have had great success (and a lot of fun) with "book nooks" at the fair. You'll need to find a fairly quiet, well lit corner where folks can go to get away from the commotion. Make sure there are plenty of cushions and chairs. Have volunteers bring in an assortment of magazines and used books. Why not see if you can find a book-loving volunteer who'd be interested in organizing some read-aloud sessions? Ask other adult and youth volunteers to sign up to come to the book nook at a specific time to read aloud from their favorite book. Make copies of the schedule and post it around the fairgrounds so people can drop by and relax for awhile. It might also be a good idea to contact a local librarian to see if the library would like to be a part of your book nook.
3. Make sure youth who love to read and write have a chance to get some recognition at the fair. In addition to creating a special category for creative writing entries, here are some other entry ideas. They're taken from the *Crazy About Books Reading Circle*.
 - **Book Review**
Encourage youth to submit a short, written review of a favorite book. Entries should include a brief summary of what the book was about, a short description of why or why not the youth liked the book and an explanation of whether or not he or she recommends the book to others.
 - **Book Display**
Youth can select a theme related to the kinds of books they enjoy reading in order to create a three-dimensional display using books, props, and other visual aids that relate to the topic or subject they've chosen.
 - **Book Cover Illustration**
Youth can create a new and original cover illustration for one of their favorite books.
 - **Top Ten Poster**
Youth can create a poster to portray 10 of their all time favorite books.
 - **Taped Book**
Youth can submit a cassette recording of a book they've read to a child or another person.
 - **Amazing Words Poster**
Youth can design a poster to illustrate new and intriguing words (and their definitions) that the youth has discovered as well as the names of the books where they were found.
 - **Reading Scrapbook or Collage**
Youth can enter a scrapbook or collage that relates to the various books they've read.

Public Speaking Judging Reminders

The following two resources are intended for individuals who have agreed to judge public speaking contests and events. Consider using them to emphasize that the underlying objective of these events has as much to do with what youth are learning about themselves as it does with the finer points of public speaking.

The handout on the next page can be sent out ahead of time along with the other information you'll be providing judges prior to the event.

The second piece is a letter from parents, which you may want to give to the judge on the day of the event. It can be included in the packet of judging forms and evaluation sheets you'll be providing.

Tip

Consider including or adapting these resources for use with other orientation programs to prepare individuals to judge other programs and events in addition to public speaking.

Sources:

Evaluating Classroom Speaking, Douglas G. Bock and E. Hope Bock, Urbana, Illinois: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, 1981, pp. 4–13.

Instructor's Manual to Accompany the Art of Public Speaking, Stephen E. Lucas, Boston, Massachusetts: McGraw Hill, 1998, pp. 46–47.

Instructor's Resource Manual with Test Items: Public Speaking, Suzanne Osborn, Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin, 1991, pg. 17.

Judge's Tip Sheet

Helping youth develop confidence in themselves as speakers

The following suggestions can help judges maintain a constructive approach while providing a candid and realistic appraisal of each speech:

1. Set a positive tone.

Before the first speaker is called, take a moment or two to welcome everyone to the event. Introduce yourself and briefly tell the audience a little about yourself and how pleased you are to be participating. Explain the procedures that will be followed, pointing out that you will be taking a few minutes between speeches to record your comments. Review the speaking order and remind speakers to wait until their names are called before walking to the front of the room to begin. Let everyone know if you will be offering a brief oral critique of all the speeches at the end of the event. Be sure to ask if there are any questions. Finally, make sure everyone knows you are looking forward to listening to their presentations and that you wish them all success.

2. Allow sufficient time between speeches to complete your evaluation.

When rushed and under pressure to move on, judges tend to become too general in their comments. Since it's essential that you provide constructive feedback to each participant, it will be important to guard against racing through an evaluation in order to get to the next speech. If need be, remind the audience of how necessary it is for you to take this time to record your comments, and thank everyone for their patience and understanding.

3. Adopt a “good news/bad news” strategy in evaluation.

Focus your initial comments on what the speaker did well. In most cases you'll be able to find something positive to emphasize. For example, you might say, “You did a nice job of meeting the time limits,” or “You certainly have a strong and clear speaking voice.” Once you've provided some good news, you can turn your attention to the bad news as long as you remember that the goal in pointing out weaknesses is to help the person improve as a speaker. Concentrate on letting him or her know exactly what needs to be corrected and what steps to take to improve. Try to offer a few specific suggestions for improvement. For instance, you might say, “Since you need to develop more eye contact with the audience. I suggest using fewer speaking notes and rehearsing the speech until you are totally familiar with it.” When you must point out mistakes, always focus the speaker on what he or she can do to improve. Be encouraging, helpful, supportive and constructive.

Another technique some judges use in order to balance negative with positive feedback is the “sandwich” approach. Begin by mentioning something the speaker did well, followed by things he or she needs to improve. End with another positive observation. That way it appears the majority of what you had to say was positive and encouraging.

4. Offer an oral critique of the speeches at the end of the round.

If you will be offering oral feedback it is best to postpone it until the end. Speakers often have a hard time paying attention to oral feedback when it's offered immediately after their presentations. That's because they usually need a few moments to relax and savor the relief of having made it through the speech!

Begin your oral critique with impersonal comments that reflect all (or many) of the speeches as a whole. For example, you might say, “The use of visual aids in today's speeches truly enhanced the presentations.”

If you will be making comments about individual speeches, be sure to focus first on the positive aspects before making suggestions for improvement. Always keep in mind that an oral critique should never include comments that could in any way embarrass or humiliate a speaker. If problems are mentioned they should only be addressed in a kindly, optimistic and supportive way.

When concluding your oral critique, be sure to ask the speakers themselves if they have any questions for you. Then, end on an enthusiastic note by inviting the audience to join you in a final round of applause for all the speakers.

Dear Public Speaking Judge,

Thank you for being here to evaluate the speeches and demonstrations being presented today. We know your job is a challenging one because you must maintain a positive, constructive tone while remaining truthful in pointing out strengths, weaknesses and mistakes.

The speakers you'll be judging are our sons and daughters. We've helped them prepare and we've watched them practice, offering advice that hopefully has been helpful. We've also helped them try to handle some of their anxiety about today's event. This is the first time some of them will be standing up to speak in front of a judge. Others are a little more experienced. All of them, however, will be looking to you to tell them how well they did. Naturally we're hoping the things you say will be encouraging rather than disheartening.

We're proud of our children—even the ones who aren't outstanding speakers. We are hoping today's experience will strengthen their confidence in themselves and teach them the value of setting goals and working to achieve them.

Thank you for being here today in order for our sons and daughters to benefit from your expertise. Your willingness to be involved makes it possible for our sons and daughters to develop skills and abilities that will make a difference in their lives.

Sincerely,

The parents of today's speakers

Start a 4-H Youth Speakers Bureau

Public speaking contests are valuable because they enable youth to set goals for themselves, be evaluated and receive constructive feedback that can help them hone their speaking skills. Sometimes, however, the competitive nature of these events becomes the primary focus for preparing and delivering a speech. That's why it's important for youth to have opportunities to use their public speaking abilities in other, non-competitive contexts as well.

The ability to prepare and deliver a speech or presentation to a variety of audiences is an extremely valuable skill. Youth who are given opportunities to use these skills soon recognize that an appreciative audience is often as satisfying as winning first place in a speech contest.

In addition, there is an important connection between public speaking and community service. The ability to speak confidently and articulately often goes hand in hand with the degree to which people feel comfortable participating in public forums, assuming leadership responsibilities and being of service to others within their communities.

Youth benefit from opportunities to deliver speeches and presentations in public—regardless of whether the speech itself was an award winner.

Tips for Coordinating a 4-H Youth Speakers Bureau

1. Identify criteria and guidelines you feel are important for youth to abide by in order to participate in the program. Consider using the following sample registration form in order to design something similar.
2. Determine how you will select youth to participate. Perhaps you may wish to ask for recommendations from judges who evaluate county public speaking events.
3. Consider having a speakers bureau kick-off event for all youth who will be participating in order to review public speaking principles; emphasize the importance of representing 4-H in a positive manner; and clarify the need to follow through on commitments when contacted to speak.
4. If you have a county 4-H ambassador group, consider involving them in developing and distributing a 4-H speakers bureau brochure which contains information about the project, and how to contact the Extension Office to obtain the name of a speaker.
5. Identify organizations, individuals, businesses and other places throughout the county where there is potential for youth to use their speaking skills. Consider the following:
 - Business groups
 - Chambers of commerce
 - Church groups
 - Community service organizations (Kiwanis, Rotary, etc.)
 - Extension County boards
 - Libraries
 - Retirement centers/nursing homes
 - Schools
 - Toastmaster clubs

4-H Youth Speakers Bureau
Registration Form

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Age _____

YES! I'd like to be considered for _____ County's 4-H Speakers Bureau.

Title of speech _____

Brief description:

If selected, I agree to follow each of these guidelines:

- I agree to follow through on arrangements and commitments that are made with the person who contacts me to give my speech.
- I agree to keep track of the date, time and location of the place I will be speaking.
- In case an emergency or illness prevents me from speaking, I agree to contact the person whose name I have been given at least 24 hours before the speaking date.
- I agree to arrange for transportation to and from the place I will be speaking.

My signature _____

I have read the above guidelines and am prepared to support my son or daughter's participation if selected for the _____ County 4-H Speakers Bureau.

Parent or guardian signature _____

A Member of the Audience

Age

Elementary and older

Teaching context

This activity could be used as a part of any teaching unit or program that deals with public speaking.

Time needed

10–15 minutes to complete the quiz
10–15 minutes for follow-up discussion

Description

This quiz is intended to encourage youth to examine some of their own listening habits and emphasize appropriate audience behavior. The activity will be most effective when used to stimulate follow-up discussion.

Advance preparation

- Duplicate sufficient copies of the following quiz.
- Make sure to review the procedure you'll use for discussing the quiz after people have completed it.

Directions

1. Introduce the activity by pointing out that public speaking wouldn't be very "public" if there weren't an audience to listen to what the speaker has to say. Yet, all too often people haven't given much thought to what it means to be "a member of the audience."
2. Distribute the quiz and instruct youth to respond to the questions and look over the answers.
3. When youth have completed the quiz, refer to the following discussion question list to re-enforce the points being emphasized.

Sum it up.

1. Remind youth that communication is always a two-way street. The person who's doing the talking can only do part of it. If nobody's listening to what's being said, there's really not much communication taking place.
2. Here's another idea to help you emphasize the above points: Why not turn things around and have a speaker evaluate the audience on how well they rate as listeners? Ask someone to pretend to do a fairly poor job presenting a short speech. At the end have him or her use the information above to point out the mistakes the audience made and what they can do to improve.

A Member of the Audience

When it comes to public speaking we sometimes forget that the person who is giving the speech isn't the only one involved in the communication process. Those who are listening to the speech also have some responsibilities.

The following survey is meant to help you take a look at things from the other side of the speaker's podium.

Directions: Indicate whether you think the following statements are **True (T)** or **False (F)**.

- _____ 1. I start fidgeting or yawning when I get bored by a speech.
- _____ 2. If I'm not interested in the speech or demonstration, I stop paying attention and start thinking about something else instead.
- _____ 3. I don't pay attention when someone gives a speech about a topic I'm already familiar with.
- _____ 4. If I'm not interested in the speech, I like to look around the room at the other people in the audience.
- _____ 5. If the room is noisy or there are other things going on around me, I lose interest in what the speaker is saying.
- _____ 6. I try to guess whether or not I'm going to like a speech by the kind of title it has been given.
- _____ 7. I don't pay much attention to a speaker if I think he or she is doing a bad job.
- _____ 8. I automatically tune out speakers if I start getting bored.
- _____ 9. I don't listen to speeches unless I agree with what the speaker is saying.
- _____ 10. Sometimes I whisper or talk very quietly to the people around me if I think of something I want to tell them while the speaker is talking.
- _____ 11. I lose interest if my chair is uncomfortable or the temperature in the room isn't right.
- _____ 12. When I have other things on my mind, I end up thinking about them instead of trying to listen to the speech.
- _____ 13. If I think the speech is silly or stupid I sometimes try to attract the attention of someone else in the audience to see if they're having the same reaction.
- _____ 14. I watch for mistakes the speaker makes and end up thinking about the things he or she does wrong.
- _____ 15. I can usually tell if I'm going to like a speech based on the speaker's appearance.
- _____ 16. I often jump to conclusions about the speech and think I know what the speaker is going to say next.
- _____ 17. Sometimes I bring along other things to keep me occupied while I'm listening to a speech (hobby, homework, book, etc.).
- _____ 18. When I disagree with what the speaker says I spend the rest of the time thinking up what I'd like to say to him or her rather than listening.

Scoring: All of the statements have to do with habits that prevent people from listening carefully to speeches and other presentations. Here are some tips to keep in mind the next time you're part of an audience:

1. Show respect for the person who is speaking (questions 7, 9, 10, and 15).
2. Concentrate on really paying attention to what's being said (questions 2, 8, 12, and 18).
3. Keep an open mind and a positive outlook about the speaker and the speech (questions 3, 6, 14, and 16).
4. Look out for distractions (questions 5, 11, 17).
5. Watch your body language (questions 1, 4, 13).

Remember: **Just because you're not the one who's giving the speech doesn't mean you don't have responsibilities of your own when it comes to the communication process. When you're in the audience, your job is to be a respectful and attentive listener.**

Follow-up Discussion

Have everyone complete the Member of the Audience Quiz. Then ask for examples of times people have given speeches and noticed that someone wasn't listening. What did it feel like?

Review the following key points about being a good listener:

1. Show respect for the person who is speaking

(questions 7, 9, 10, 15).

Why should you respect the speaker even if you think he or she is doing a poor job?

What are some ways to respond when you disagree with the speaker?

What does it say about you when you start talking during someone's speech?

What's wrong with judging people according to the way they look?

2. Concentrate on really paying attention to what's being said

(questions 2, 8, 12, 18).

Why bother paying attention if you're not interested in what the speaker is saying?

What can you do when you're bored by the speech?

What can you do to keep yourself from thinking about other things during a speech?

Why listen to someone when you don't agree with what he or she is saying?

3. Keep an open mind and positive attitude about the speaker and the speech

(questions 3, 6, 14, 16).

Why listen to a speech if you know more about the topic than the speaker does?

What's the problem with judging a speech by its title?

What should you do when a speaker makes a mistake?

Why is it a good idea to listen carefully to the speaker—even when you're pretty sure you know what he or she is going to say?

4. Look out for distractions

(questions 5, 11, 17).

What should you do if you can't hear the speaker or if something is going on around you that is distracting?

What should you do if your chair is uncomfortable or the room is too hot or too cold?

What's the problem with trying to work on a hobby, read a book or do something else during a speech?

5. Watch your body language

(questions 1, 4, 13).

Why is it a good idea for audience members to watch their "body language"?

What's wrong with looking around the room instead of watching the speaker?

What is it like for the speaker when people in the audience are behaving inappropriately?

*Good speakers
deserve good
audiences!*