

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR PROJECTS

Intended Audience:

- 4-H Club members, leaders and parents

Learning Objectives:

4-H Club members, leaders and parents will:

- See the value of setting goals to successfully complete a project
- Consider the idea of making wise project choices

Target Essential Elements:

4-H project experiences teach members important *mastery* skills.

Time: 20-30 minutes

Supplies Needed:

Looking at Project Possibilities Activity

- Pens or pencils
- Handout

Handouts

- Looking at Project Possibilities
- Project Leaders: Goal Setting Yearly Planning Guide for Leaders
- Parents and Project Leaders: Project Completion and Evaluation
- Evaluation

BACKGROUND

Projects are an important part of the 4-H experience. Projects are simply topics 4-H members can explore. Projects give you the opportunity to learn new things, have new experiences and have fun. Doing different projects helps us to find out our interests including what we like or don't like. We're going to be talking about picking a project, planning for project success and completing the project.

WHAT TO DO

Activity: Looking at Project Possibilities

(Hand out pens or pencils and "Looking at Project Possibilities.") Look at the list of projects available. Are there any projects listed that you don't understand? (Consider asking some questions like "What is Entomology?") If so, look at the descriptions in the "Project Selection Guide." Read the description of the projects that seem unclear. You'll see that many projects have different levels related to the member's age or experience. Put a check in front of five projects that interest you.



Using the five projects that interest you, underline the projects that have a project leader or that your parent is able to help you. Now, still thinking about those five projects, circle the ones that you have the time and resources – space, supplies, cost – to complete. Considering your interest, available volunteer or parent help, time and resources: what's your top project choice?

Picking Projects

The activity that you just did included the most important things to think about when picking your project. These include your interests, help available, time and resources needed. You also need to think about how much skill is involved. Some projects might be more appropriate for members who are in their teens. Parents should be involved in helping their child decide which projects best fit their child and family.

Some other things to think about when picking projects:

- How many other club members are taking the same project? It's fun to be able to do the same things with others.
- When will the project meetings happen? Will meetings or activities happen at times that you can participate?
- How many projects can you handle? Be realistic and think about your time. It's better to take one or two projects that you can complete than to take more than you can do during the year. Think about your schedule: school, sports, music, etc.

Do Ahead:

- Have supplies and handouts ready.
- Revise the “Project Possibilities” list to fit your county or club options. Check Wisconsin 4-H state web site for most current statewide project list.
- Have most recent state 4-H Project Selection Guide available as a reference.
- Contact project leaders to find out their meeting plans for coming year (optional).
- Recruit someone to record the reflection discussion to use as an evaluation (optional).

Sources:

- Created by Linda Kustka, Professor Emeritus, Department of Youth Development, UW-Extension.
- “Project Selection by 4-H Members, Setting Project Goals, Project Completion and Evaluation” by Sherri Seibold, Extension Educator, 4-H Youth Development, University of Illinois Extension. Available at www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/4hfacts/index.html.
- Wisconsin 4-H Project list is available at www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/onlinepro/index.cfm.

Getting Started in Your Project

Projects start at different times throughout the year. Some projects might happen once a month in winter. Others might be 3-4 sessions in one month. Whenever the project starts, it is most helpful to set some goals. (Option: show related project record book pages.) When you are doing a project for the first time, your leader or parent might suggest some goals that are necessary. For example, in the Foods project some goals might be to learn proper measuring, follow a recipe and handle food safely. Look through the project manual to get ideas on goals. Parents and leaders should be involved in this goal setting.

Some tips on setting project goals:

- Set goals that can be done as a group or individually with parent or leader and member.
- Complete your goals early in the year and set up a timeline to work on goals before the fair, exhibit time or the end of 4-H year.
- Setting goals gives members the opportunity to be active or have a “stake” in what they’ll be doing.
- The goals should include what they will do, what will happen when it’s done (result) and a timetable. Write down the goals.
- As the year progresses, record what you did and learned in your record book or another place.
- It’s okay for goals to change as the project work happens.

Project Completion

Everyone feels good when projects are finished! Projects are finished when members have completed their goals. The goal might include exhibiting something at the county fair or similar event. You don’t need to take something to county fair to successfully complete a project.

Avoid the last minute tension of finishing projects on the day of county fair by doing them throughout the year. Set deadlines for different goals.

As you’re working on and finishing projects, take time to reflect on what is happening. Talk about this with your leaders, other members and parents. Talk about questions like: What happened as you were working on your project? How did you handle any unexpected things? What were the rewards and challenges of this project? What did you learn? How will you use what you learned? What would you like to do in the future in this project?

Prepare for county fair by finding out what to expect. Experienced members and leaders can share what happens at fair and give tips to make the experience positive. Use the judging results as one measure of how well the project went for you. Keep the “big picture” in mind. You were a success in the project if you worked on your goals and learned from the experiences! Finally, celebrate your success!

Closing

Projects are where much of the 4-H action happens. It’s your choice to pick what fits you. We’ve given you tips that will help you get started with your project experiences. Enjoy the learning fun in the year ahead!

Your reactions to this session help us evaluate its effectiveness. Please take the time now to complete this short evaluation.

TALK IT OVER

Reflect:

- What do you think is most important to think about when picking a 4-H project?
- Looking back at past project experiences, what has helped you have a good experience?

Apply:

- How might our club hear about and support member project work?

ENHANCE/SIMPLIFY

Enhance:

- Consider doing this session at the time your 4-H club hands out enrollment materials or before enrollment is due.
- Before the meeting, ask project leaders to develop a timeline on when their sessions will be scheduled and what they are thinking about doing. Share this information in the “Picking a Project” discussion.
- Give project leaders the handouts “Goal Setting Yearly Planning Guide for Leaders” and “Project Completion and Evaluation.”
- Give parents the handout, “Project Completion and Evaluation.”

Simplify:

- If you are short on time, do “Looking at Project Possibilities” and “Picking a Project” at one meeting. Next month, do “Getting Started in Your Project” and “Project Completion.”

EVALUATION

It is important to use an evaluation that is consistent with your teaching objectives. The short evaluation in the handouts can be modified to meet your needs. An alternative to a written evaluation is to record the Reflection discussion under “Talk It Over.” Recruit someone ahead of time to take notes while you are leading the discussion. Remember to share the evaluation results with 4-H Youth Development Extension staff in your county.

ADDITIONAL WEB LINKS

- “Project Selection by 4-H Members, Setting Project Goals, Project Completion and Evaluation” by Sherri Seibold, Extension Educator, 4-H Youth Development, University of Illinois Extension. Available at www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/4hfacts/index.html.
- Wisconsin 4-H Project list is available at www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/onlinpro/index.cfm.

***Finalized by the Strengthening 4-H Club Leadership Work Team:
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Looking at Project Possibilities

- Put a check in front of five projects that interest you.
- Of these five projects, underline the projects that have a project leader or that your parent is able to help you.
- Now, still thinking about those five projects, circle the ones that you have the time and resources (space, supplies, cost) to complete. You may add or subtract projects to this list.

Animal Sciences

Beef
Cats
Dairy
Dogs
Goats
Horses
Pets
Poultry
Rabbits
Swine
Veterinary Science

Arts & Communication

Arts & Crafts
Block Printing
Communications
Computers
Drawing & Painting
Folk Arts
Leather craft
Metal Enameling
Photography
Theatre Arts

Community Involvement

Citizenship
International Program
Self-Determined
Youth Leadership

Family, Home & Health

Child Development
Clothing
Consumer Savvy
Crocheting
Foods & Nutrition
Health
Home Environment
Intergenerational Programs
Knitting

Family, Home & Health

Child Development
Clothing
Consumer Savvy
Crocheting
Foods & Nutrition
Health
Home Environment
Intergenerational Programs
Knitting

Mechanical Sciences

Aerospace
Bicycling
Electricity
Scale Models
Small Engines
Tractors
Woodworking

Natural Resources

Adventures
Backpacking
Bicycling
Birds
Canoeing
Entomology
Forestry
Naturespace
Recycling
Shooting Sports
Sport fishing
Water
Winter Travel

Plant & Soil Sciences

Corn
Flowers
Forage
Fruits and/or Vegetables
Home Grounds
House Plants
Plant Crafts
Small Grains

Goal Setting Yearly Planning Guide for Leaders

September - October

- Help members evaluate the past year.
- Assist members in enrolling in 4-H projects.

November - December

- Assist members in developing goals for the year.
- Develop project group plans for the year.

January - March

- Leaders check 4-H'ers progress.
- Have members write down things on planning sheets.
- Help members evaluate plans. Are there any changes, additions or deletions of goals?

April - June

- Have member's record work done on planning sheets.
- Have member's record participation in activities and events.
- Provide encouragement and reminders.
- Assist members in preparing exhibits for county fair.
- Prepare members for conference judging.

June - August

- Check progress of work.
- Have members write down work done on planning sheets.
- Encourage members to exhibit at county fair.
- Review feedback received by members from judges.

August

- Have members complete planning sheets.
- Talk to parents and leaders about accomplishments.
- Evaluate and start planning for next year.

Project Completion and Evaluation

Things tend to taper off until there is a “flurry of activity” just prior to exhibition time at county fair or other exhibiting opportunity and judging days. The following are some suggestions for parents and project leaders to assist youth in doing a better job of completing project work and of evaluating their own experiences.

Parents:

- Help members set up a timeline for project work to be done based on their goals. Write these dates on the family calendar and check progress periodically.
- Set aside time weekly or monthly for the family to work together on project work. Include time to update project planning sheets and “My 4-H Activities” record.
- Assist members in securing the resources that they need to have to work on their projects. Having the supplies on hand gives members a chance to work on projects when they have a few minutes of leisure time.
- Designate a special drawer, chest or tub that completed project work can be stored in safely until fair time. Members then will have a variety of items to choose from for their fair exhibit.
- Set aside time closer to the fair entry date to review all of the work completed in each project. Use this time to allow the member to carefully critique each item and determine which item they would like to select to represent their work in the project area for the year. This is an excellent opportunity to help young people practice the life skill of decision-making.

Project Leaders:

- Establish a regular schedule of project group experiences where members may gather to work together on their project. This schedule could be once a month for six months, four Saturdays in a row, or three times a week during the month of June. The important thing is that members and adults gather to learn and have fun together.
- Vary the activities that occur at project meetings. Talks and demonstrations might be presented at one meeting, a field trip to secure resources for project work might be at another, and two or three meetings might be spent working on specific components of a project item.
- Allocate time at project meetings to update planning sheets, answer questions, have members report on progress made, and help them think about what comes next.
- Try to maintain contact with parents of members. Answer their questions and encourage them to work with their members at home on their projects. Parents might be invited to attend one or more project meetings.
- Discuss the concept of “project completion.” This is acceptable progress toward goals set at the beginning of the year. As a project leader, you will need to be flexible and take into consideration the age and ability of each child as well as the amount of parental support and resources available. This is where we can help young people learn the life skill of responsibility.
- Allocate time for members to bring their project work to a meeting. Have each member review and evaluate his or her work. Review the planning sheets and the goals they set earlier. Give recognition for the work that has been accomplished. Youth, like most adults, have unfinished work or tasks, but they will probably be willing to discuss what they have accomplished.
- Celebrate the accomplishment of learning by doing through the members’ project work. Involve members, parents and junior leaders in the recognition activity. There are recognition items for “progress toward goals” available through the local Extension office. Talk to the 4-H youth staff there about how to take advantage of such resources.

Young people, parents and project leaders all need to work together to see that 4-H project work occurs, that learning by doing takes place, and that everyone has fun while developing the life skills of decision-making, communication and responsibility.

Making the Most of Your Projects

Evaluation

1. How useful is this information in selecting a 4-H project? (Circle one response.)

Very Useful Somewhat Useful Not Sure Not Useful

2. Do you feel more comfortable setting project goals?

Yes No

3. What will you do as a result of this program?