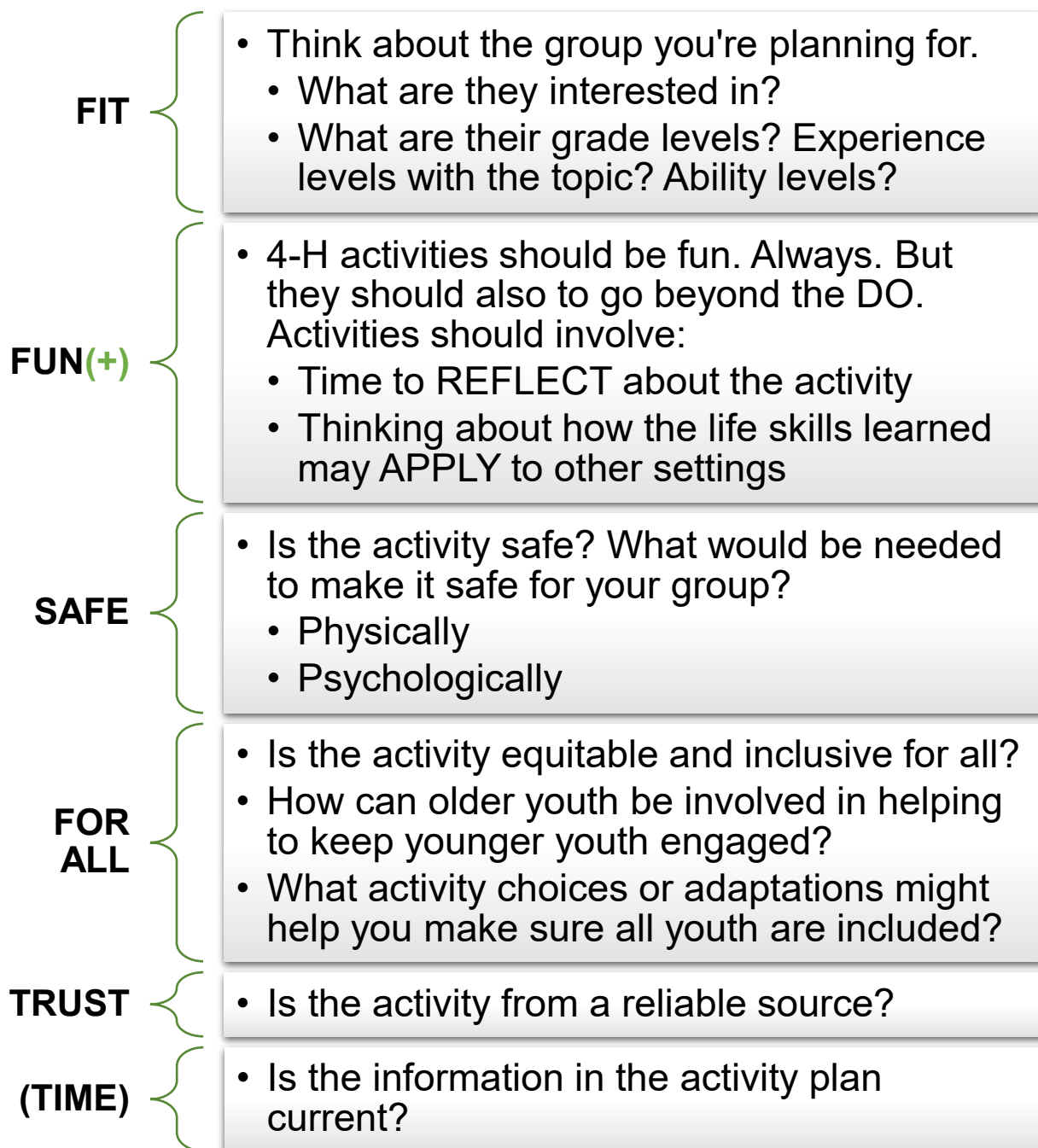# Choosing the Right Activity

When choosing an activity for an individual or a group of youth, volunteers are encouraged to consider the following:

FIT

- Think about the group you're planning for.
  - What are they interested in?
  - What are their grade levels? Experience levels with the topic? Ability levels?

FUN(+)

- 4-H activities should be fun. Always. But they should also to go beyond the DO. Activities should involve:
  - Time to REFLECT about the activity
  - Thinking about how the life skills learned may APPLY to other settings

SAFE

- Is the activity safe? What would be needed to make it safe for your group?
  - Physically
  - Psychologically

FOR ALL

- Is the activity equitable and inclusive for all?
- How can older youth be involved in helping to keep younger youth engaged?
- What activity choices or adaptations might help you make sure all youth are included?

TRUST

- Is the activity from a reliable source?

(TIME)

- Is the information in the activity plan current?

Adapted from Arnold, M.E. (2019). "Youth Program Quality Principles." Oregon State University: School of Public Health and Human Sciences. Retrieved from https://health.oregonstate.edu/thriving-model/training-materials-educators

FIT—Think about the group you're planning for.
- **What are they interested in?**—Connect to what sparks youths' interest. If you have a large group with wide interests, make sure you offer a variety of activities from one event to the next.
- **What are their grade levels? Experience levels with the topic? Ability levels?**—Asking these questions helps us meet the youth where they are. It helps to understand the characteristics of different ages of young people. However, we may need to ask youth to find out how much experience or skill they have with a topic.

FUN(+)—4-H activities should be fun. Always. In positive youth development, most activities also follow the Experiential Learning Model. This means the youth get to DO something in a hands-on way. Then, the volunteer supports learning by providing time to REFLECT about the activity and the chance to think about how the life skills learned may APPLY to other settings. This allows youth to build on what they learned creating a FUN+ situation, every time.

SAFE—Is the activity safe? What would be needed to make it safe for your group?
- **Physical safety** means different things at different ages. For youth in grades K-2, physical safety means the activity should be so safe that even if they don't follow the directions, they still won't be hurt. For older teens who need to be able to take bigger risks, physical safety means preparing them and minimizing the risks we know about.
- **Psychological safety** means that young people feel mentally and emotionally safe. In a positive youth development setting, this means feeling a sense of belonging and having positive interactions with others. All youth need to feel included in a meaningful way, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientations, or ability.

FOR ALL—Is the activity equitable and inclusive for all? How can older youth be involved in helping to keep younger youth engaged? What activity choices or adaptations might help you make sure all youth are included?

These questions provide an opportunity to dig deeper into the FIT discussed above. FIT was for the group; FOR ALL is for individuals who may feel left out for one reason or another. Consider what may make an individual youth feel excluded—such as language, culture, ability, background or other factors—from the activity and think about what adaptations might be needed to make sure everyone can participate equitably.

TRUST—Fun, engaging activities are not hard to find on the Internet. A simple Google or Pinterest search turns up an overwhelming number of possibilities. However, most of these activities will not include the (+) discussed in FUN(+). Using Extension or University resources increases the likelihood of finding activities that have both the FUN and the (+).

(TIME)—Unfortunately, many activities exist that are old or out-of-date. When choosing an activity, take a moment to consider how the world has changed since the resource was created. Consider things like how technology or communication has changed, the words we use to talk to or about people, and other changes over the last few decades. What updates might need to make the resource current and timely?