



4-H Recordkeeping

A Teaching Tool for the Leader

Many people like working on a project but don't enjoy keeping records on it. Since records are necessary throughout life, however, 4-H members should learn both the importance and the methods of record-keeping. Seeing that members do so is an important job for the 4-H leader.

The skills, attitudes, and habits the member acquires in keeping the record are more important than the completed record. How the leader uses the record to enhance the growth and development of each member is also important.

Use records as tools for developing members' skills, attitudes and habits through the 4-H experience. Records help:

- To establish member goals and planning for the 4-H club program.
- To teach and give experiences in decisionmaking, responsibility, cooperation, planning and setting individual goals, and evaluation.
- To develop members' record-keeping skills and habits.
 - 4-H'ers to manage their project(s).
 - To improve members' skills in organization, spelling, grammar, and math.

When asked how records have been helpful, older 4-H members said their records:

- Serve as a scrapbook of experiences.
- Help manage resources (financial and material).
- Enable them to reflect on and evaluate their experiences.
- Help them plan their 4-H experiences.
- Let others see what they have done (not how good a record they have kept).

How to Use Records

To convince members of the importance and necessity for keeping records, leaders should:

- Understand the purpose of records.
- Develop a plan to use records as part of the learning experience.
- Be enthusiastic about records.
- Use records to plan and evaluate experiences for each individual in the group.
 - Use records to help you select members who should receive recognition. Don't judge records themselves. Use them to evaluate goals established, progress, and the experiences of the member. Don't compare records between members. Base recognition on project scope and the experiences and progress of each member in achieving his or her goals.

The successful 4-H experience involves youth, their parents, and leaders in identifying goals for the club and for each of the members. To accomplish this, review *Planning A 4-H Club Program* (4-H 0240L). Have members write their personal goals on their records or on *My 4-H Notes* (4-H 039R).

Planning involves setting individual goals, evaluating these goals with the group, establishing group goals, and establishing the year's calendar. After planning, initiate action; then evaluate the group and each individual. Base this evaluation on the goals set by each individual.

In summary, remember:

- A 4-H record is information selected by the member to help record and evaluate progress toward a goal.
- All 4-H records are a teaching tool. Leaders can use recordkeeping to help 4-H'ers develop skills, attitudes, and knowledge.

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How to Teach Recordkeeping

Present records in a meaningful manner; show 4-H members how records can help them. Members will respond to those things that have immediate use and meaning, and will learn what they think is important to them.

- **Well begun is half done.** Discuss records at an early meeting. Make recordkeeping an important part of the club's program and plan to use the records as part of the overall learning experience. Make recordkeeping simple and meaningful—not busy work.

- **Let parents know what's expected.** Invite parents to the meeting when you explain records. This meeting should be one of the first you hold. Tell parents how they can help. Both parents and members need to understand the purpose of records and how to use them. Remind parents that 4-H'ers learn by doing, but that parents need to work with them.

- **Discuss reasons for keeping records.** Records help 4-H'ers understand their projects and accomplish the goals they set for themselves. Records can be used when reporting income, substantiating expenses, and showing financial gain or loss. Records show progress through skills learned, project growth, and 4-H experiences. Completed records provide information to use in establishing new goals for new projects.

- **Encourage parents to take pictures.** Pictures of members participating in 4-H projects and activities are a valuable addition to records and scrapbooks. Parents can also assist by encouraging members to keep newspaper clippings.

- **Demonstrate recordkeeping.** Use a sample record to show members and parents how to fill out their records and keep them up-to-date. Use a member's records as the example.

- **Assign recordkeeping to junior leaders.** Let the junior leader help the younger members. Be ready to assist them if necessary, but don't take the responsibility away from them.

- **Have periodic recordbook reviews.** Review records at meetings and on project visits; replace record sheets that have been lost. All records should be brought up-to-date each month. If your club has an assortment of older and younger members, you may want to pair a younger member with an older member for regular monthly reviews. Older members learn how to help others and improve their own recordkeeping skills while younger members receive individual attention and assistance.

- **Don't overemphasize records.** Remember to keep records in perspective of the total 4-H experience. Recordkeeping is easier for some members than others; encourage all members to take pride in keeping records. Members should use pencil. Don't ask them to redo records, but to add continuously to them during the year. Neatness is important, but evidence of use is also important. Unused records are useless.

- **Stress facts.** In order to tell an accurate story, write down the facts when they happen. Facts are much easier to deal with than estimates.

- **Recognize differences in young people, situations, and projects.** It may not be necessary for all members to keep records. Junior members may establish very simple goals, such as raising a dog or having fun, while Intermediate and Senior members will have more defined and complex goals. Some projects, such as horseless horse clubs or geology clubs, may emphasize a memorybook approach; a beef project, however, will stress financial recordkeeping. Members who participate in animal projects without an animal may only

keep a memory-type record. In addition to age, youth with physical and mental limitations may not keep the same kind or level of record.

- **Be enthusiastic.** Your attitude influences how members feel about keeping records. You can make recordkeeping interesting and worthwhile or a dull chore. Help members use records to measure progress and stimulate self-improvement. Impress the values rather than the weaknesses of keeping records.

- **Recognize good recordkeeping.** Give recognition for progress; encourage those who can go beyond the minimum requirements. Commend members for work done, particularly those who are making progress toward their goals. Recognize members for completeness, use, and their evaluation of their experience. Don't compare members' records. Recordkeeping is a self-growth, self-evaluation process.

Use records as a teaching tool. When completing a club activity, review what members have learned and accomplished. Have members summarize this in their record. As a teaching tool, 4-H records are designed to help a member:

- Recognize what the 4-H experience has contributed to his or her personal growth.

- Evaluate progress toward his or her personal growth.

- Learn skills in recordkeeping.

- Learn to effectively communicate in writing.

- Learn to appreciate the use of records in making decisions.

Secondary objectives of recordkeeping include helping leaders evaluate each member's progress toward his or her goals, and evaluating their teaching effectiveness.

Records should not be kept just to win awards. However, they do provide information for members when they wish to be considered for special opportunities and recognition. 4-H recognition is based on completed work and progress made toward the goals as shown in the records.

Types of Records

There are two types of records in 4-H. One helps youth and leaders establish goals, maintain a record of experiences, measure accomplishments, and evaluate their experiences. These include the *4-H Permanent Record*, *My 4-H Notes*, advancement programs, and project records such as *Animal Science for Junior Members*, *Entomology*, *Clothing*, *Junior Leadership*, *Gun Safety* and *Archery*, and *My 4-H Project Record*.

The second type of record helps youth manage their projects. These include *Animal Science Production Records*, some sections of the *Animal Science Junior*, *Intermediate*, and *Senior Records* (inventory, feed, and equipment); *Photography*; *Dog*; *Horticulture*; and *Feed-and-Growth Records*.



Kinds of Records

- **My 4-H Records.** This is a folder in which 4-H members keep their project bulletins and records. Insert split staples from the back side and bend them down inside the front cover to secure the record sheets in the folder. The folder has instructions for keeping 4-H records and 4-H information. Older members may want to use a three-ring notebook for their project materials.

- **Project Records.** A record is a part of most 4-H projects. Many projects have a special record sheet. In some cases, the project manual is a workbook that also serves as a record. For projects without specific records and books, use "*My 4-H Record*." In some projects, a report of goals, progress made toward goals, and plans for the future may be emphasized.

If the record sheet has a section for "Things I Want to Do and Learn This Year," have your members complete it before you develop the club program for the year. A member may want to do and learn some things that you have not identified. Encourage and assist members to accomplish their personal goals.

- **My 4-H Notes.** This ruled sheet is available to 4-H members for their annual 4-H diary. It can provide a summary of things done, skills learned, goals accomplished during the 4-H year and feelings about the 4-H experience. Items can be noted as they happen, with a summary at the end of the year. One sheet can serve for all projects and activities. Add a sheet of ruled paper if needed.

- **Oregon 4-H Permanent Record.** This eight-page record is a condensed summary of the member's 4-H experiences in all projects over a period of years. It is usually given to 4-H members during their first year of 4-H. It will be needed when the 4-H members apply for certain recognition programs. Encourage members to keep this record up-to-date and ready for use when needed.

- **Advancement Programs.** In projects where there is an advancement program, this may be the most important record. This record shows the scope of the program and progress toward individual goals.

- **Production Records.** In production-oriented projects of Rabbits, Beef, Sheep, Swine, Dairy, and Dairy Goats, members have production records that are designed to assist them in the production management of their project.

Evaluate Recordkeeping

The following questions may be helpful in evaluating your record-keeping program. You may discover other questions to ask yourself throughout the 4-H year.

- Were records used to help establish individual goals and plan the club program?
- Were records presented and explained early in the 4-H year?
- Were parents encouraged to assist their child with recordkeeping?
- Was a junior leader given responsibility for records?
- Was a regular time and procedure established for using and reviewing records?
- Were methods of keeping records demonstrated to the members?
- Were members commended on progress made during the year?
- Did members bring their records to meetings and keep them up-to-date?
- Did members have an opportunity to share their records with others?
- Were records used to assist the evaluation of 4-H experience with each member?

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