



Welcome to the Oregon 4-H Adventures Program

4-H Adventures is an informal educational program designed for children in grades K–3. The program supports young children’s natural curiosity, enthusiasm for learning, and high energy levels by giving them an opportunity for active learning. The 4-H Adventures program encourages children to have fun, develop friendships, and learn about their world.

As a volunteer leader, you play a pivotal role in the 4-H Adventures program. Your encouragement and knowledge will set the stage for your members’ growth. In order to build upon the teaching skills you already possess, we offer this program guide. We hope the guide will give you fresh insights and research-based child development practices that you can use. Your local Extension 4-H agent and other 4-H Adventures leaders can assist you as well. (If you are considering becoming a leader, your local Extension 4-H agent has an application and training process for you to complete.)

The name “4-H Adventures” reflects the excitement and wonder children bring to learning. To young children, life *is* an adventure! We hope your volunteer experience will reinforce not only your members’ excitement for learning, but also your own spirit of adventure.

Guiding values

The 4-H Adventures program is part of the Oregon 4-H Youth Development Education program. The mission of Oregon 4-H is to assist youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and forming attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive members of a global society. In support of this mission, 4-H Adventures leaders teach young children by working with practices that are:

- ♦ Child-centered (focused on the child’s needs)
- ♦ Noncompetitive
- ♦ Developmentally and culturally appropriate
- ♦ Open to all youth

*Lori McGraw, former 4-H
program coordinator, 4-H Youth
Development; a revision of work
by Beverly Hobbs, Extension spe-
cialist, 4-H Youth Development;
both of Oregon State University.*

In addition to these practices, the 4-H Adventures program encourages family and community involvement, and it values diversity.

What 4-H Adventures members gain

By providing fun experiences for 4-H Adventures members, you will help them develop:

- ♦ A positive self-concept
- ♦ Life skills that enhance self-understanding, social interaction, decisionmaking, and physical development
- ♦ Knowledge in sciences, literature, and the arts through learning by experience
- ♦ Positive attitudes about learning
- ♦ Ongoing relationships with caring adults and older youth
- ♦ Family and community relationships
- ♦ An understanding of and appreciation for social and cultural diversity

Policies and guidelines

Generally, the policies and guidelines that are applied to the 4-H program for youth in grades 4–12 also apply to the 4-H Adventures program. There are several differences, however, that are important to note.

Who may participate

The 4-H Adventures program is only for children in grades K–3.

Competition

Competitive activities are developmentally inappropriate for children in this age range. Therefore, children enrolled in 4-H Adventures may not participate in competitive 4-H events. Instead, children are encouraged to develop social skills by cooperating with one another.

Working with large animals and dogs

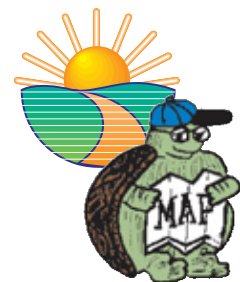
Because K–3 children lack the mental and physical skills for controlling and understanding the strength of large animals, 4-H Adventures members may not have direct contact with large animals such as cattle, goats, horses, sheep, swine, and llamas. Additionally, 4-H Adventures members may not have responsibility for controlling dogs of any size within 4-H group settings.

Other high-risk activities

K–3 children may not participate in 4-H shooting sports programs. They also may not participate in motorcycle, motor bike, or all-terrain vehicle projects.

Club officers

If your club decides to have club officers, be sure all members have an opportunity to participate in each office. Fill them on a rotating basis.



Team leadership

Oregon 4-H policy requires that two responsible people, unrelated to each other, shall be in attendance at all 4-H Adventures activities. At least one of these people must be enrolled as a 4-H Adventures leader. Others, such as parents, teen leaders, or other adults, also may be responsible for the children. Of course, the involvement of more than two adults is always welcome.

Valuing diversity

Though all young children and their families share similar characteristics, they also vary in important ways. For example, all families enjoy celebrating holidays. However, they celebrate in unique ways. Families might prepare different foods for the same holiday, depending on the ethnicity of family members. Families might celebrate different holidays depending on their religious heritage. 4-H Adventures members and their families can learn from one another by sharing their various traditions.

Family structure is another form of diversity. Some children live with married parents, while other children have divorced parents. Some children have step-parents. Also, some children have adoptive parents and others have biological ones. It is important to respect all families within your club.

Diversity also includes children who have disabilities. Children with disabilities live in all communities. Despite their special needs, they are more like other children than they are different from them. They enjoy learning, having fun, and developing friendships. They also appreciate recognition for their accomplishments.

The involvement of children with disabilities in 4-H Adventures provides valuable learning opportunities for all involved. Children with disabilities benefit from participation in the program. Children without disabilities gain understanding of life experiences that are different from their own. Leaders develop new skills to accommodate the special needs of a child with a disability.

The Oregon 4-H program values youth and families from diverse backgrounds and circumstances. Discrimination because of race, sex, sexual orientation, color, national origin, religious belief, or disability is not allowed. Rather than prohibiting participation, the 4-H Adventures program promotes openness to and respect for all types of social and cultural diversity. Diversity creates a wonderful opportunity for everyone to learn and grow.



Understanding the development of K-3 children

Understanding child development will help you offer the most appropriate and fun experiences for your 4-H Adventures members. The information in this section has been drawn from research and summarizes the most common developmental path children follow. Of course, not all children follow the same path. However, most K-3 children have common characteristics.

Also keep in mind that there are varying degrees of development within the same child. For example, a child may have more highly developed thinking skills



relative to his or her social skills. Remembering the different ways that children vary in their growth will help you create the best program for everyone.

Physical development

- ♦ Children this age grow more slowly than they did in previous years.
- ♦ Because of this slower growth, they have time to improve their body control.
- ♦ They have a great deal of energy and enjoy running, biking, throwing, and other large-muscle activities.
- ♦ They like to practice their coordination and balance.
- ♦ Fine motor skills are developing. They need more practice to refine these skills and achieve control over such tasks as writing, cutting with scissors, and manipulating small objects.

Practices that enhance physical development

K–3 children benefit from activities that:

- Promote practice
- Use more large motor skills
- Don't require perfection in fine motor activities, such as writing

Social development

- ♦ K–3 children are learning how to get along with other children.
- ♦ Friendships become more and more important, particularly same-sex friendships.
- ♦ Children increasingly enjoy working in pairs or small groups.
- ♦ Pleasing adults is important to K–3 children. They are learning to interact positively with adults outside their immediate family.

Practices that enhance social development

K–3 children benefit from activities that:

- Encourage the development of friendships
- Take place in small groups rather than large groups
- Allow them to be helpful to others
- Promote positive interactions with parents and other adults

Emotional development

- ♦ Children this age are developing a positive self-concept and a sense that they are competent.
- ♦ Accepting failure is difficult for young children.
- ♦ They are self-critical and sensitive to criticism from others.
- ♦ K–3 children are learning about their own and others' feelings.
- ♦ Emotional ups and downs occur but usually do not last long.

Practices that enhance emotional development

K–3 children benefit from activities that:

- Encourage success
- Promote positive feedback from adults
- Help them learn about their own and others' feelings



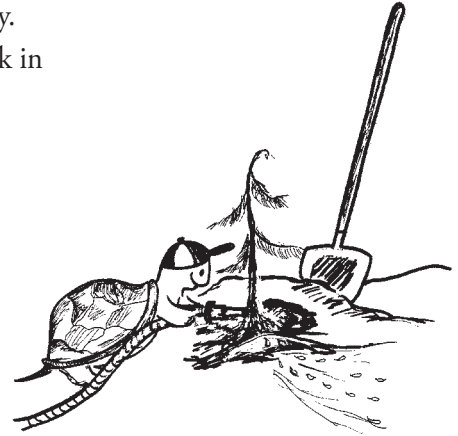
Cognitive development

- ♦ Children this age are learning to think about and solve problems mentally.
- ♦ Though they are learning to think “in their heads,” they continue to think in concrete terms. In other words, they learn by seeing and doing.
- ♦ They are developing the ability to understand another’s point of view.
- ♦ They enjoy sorting and classifying objects.
- ♦ Great gains are made in their ability to read, write, and use numbers.

Practices that enhance cognitive development

K–3 children benefit from activities that:

- Are hands-on and use all of their senses
- Focus on doing rather than finishing projects
- Encourage exploration of the world
- Allow them to create cherished collections of items such as seashells, baseball cards, or dolls



Building positive relationships

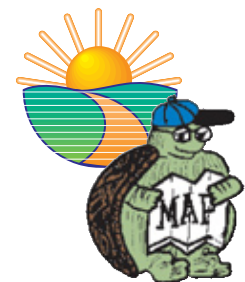
4-H Adventures leaders can promote young children’s development by forming positive relationships with them and by supporting relationships between members and their parents. Both parents and leaders are interested in promoting the development of children. Together, they can help children become caring, well-educated adults.

Parents and leaders need similar skills to help children develop well. The following research-based practices are offered to both leaders and parents to help them nurture and guide 4-H Adventures members. The information is drawn from a variety of Extension sources (see “4-H Adventures resources,” pages 10–11).

Nurture children through support

Effective nurturing is one of the best ways to promote a child’s development. When children feel accepted and approved of, they have a foundation from which to grow and explore their worlds. When children receive a combination of warm, nurturing support along with clear standards and reasonable control, they grow to become competent, caring adults. Without nurturance, however, children do not do as well—even in the area of achievement. Here are aspects of nurturing to remember.

- ♦ Show affection and compassion.
- ♦ Foster children’s self-respect and hope.
- ♦ Accept, appreciate, and cherish each child’s individuality.
- ♦ Avoid comparing children with each other.
- ♦ Listen and attend to children’s feelings and ideas.
- ♦ Teach kindness.



Guide children appropriately

The most effective guidance balances warmth and acceptance with control and strictness. If you maintain this balance, you ensure a positive experience for your 4-H Adventures members.

Use the following examples as general guidelines to help you lead your club effectively.

Focus on Do's instead of Don'ts.

Telling children what not to do does not help them learn what they should do. When they know how and why to do things, children feel secure. The following are some examples.

- Instead of “Don’t run in the house,” try **“Please walk down the hallway.”**
- Instead of “Don’t throw the ball near the window,” try **“Throw the ball to the playground.”**

Change surroundings to change behavior.

Misbehavior may be caused by situations that you can change easily. For example, when children begin to bicker during a meeting, perhaps one of the children is tired and needs to do a quiet activity. Or, maybe the children are hungry and need a snack.

Give choices.

An important part of growing up is learning to make choices. Give children two or three choices whenever possible, and accept their choices. Misbehavior can be reduced when children feel they have an influence on their surroundings.

Set reasonable limits.

Everyone needs to know how far they can go, especially children. Limits allow children freedom to make decisions within given boundaries. Once you have set limits, be consistent. Set limits after you answer these questions:

- Is this limit necessary for the child’s safety?
- Is it necessary for the safety and well-being of others?
- Is it necessary for the protection of property?
- Does this limit stop children from satisfying natural curiosity or activity needs?

Set a good example.

Children learn from adults by watching and listening to them. Then, they do what they have seen and heard. Behaving positively is part of being a leader.

Teach problem-solving.

Young children need help solving problems, especially with other children. They need practice expressing their emotions in acceptable ways. They also need help brainstorming solutions that include every child’s viewpoint.

Recognize and reinforce appropriate behavior.

When children are behaving well, let them know. They will respond to your encouragement by trying to please you more.



Encourage family involvement

Family involvement in the 4-H Adventures program can enrich both club and family experiences. Though K–3 children are forming relationships with friends and important adults like teachers and club leaders, they continue to have strong attachments to their families. Parents and other family members are important resources for 4-H Adventures clubs.

According to recent research, parents are willing volunteers. “Nobody asked me” is the most frequent response given by people who do not volunteer. Ask both mothers and fathers to become involved. Invite them to help with field trips or special projects. Take advantage of Parent Newsletters (4-H 681LA, available online at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/4h/>) to inform parents of club activities and to encourage children to learn at home.

Scheduling family activities is another way to encourage family involvement. Family picnics or trips to theme parks are examples of fun family activities.

Enhancing learning environments

The 4-H Adventures program reflects a child-centered approach. It attends not only to the materials used to teach young children but also to the environment in which they are taught.

Learning by doing

There are many ways to teach K–3 children. You can:

- ♦ Stand and tell them what you want them to know.
- ♦ Show them what you want them to know.
- ♦ Have them do an activity that teaches them what you want them to know.

Studies show that the best way to help young children remember new information is to have them do a hands-on learning activity. This “learning by doing” model is known to educators as *experiential learning*.

The 4-H Adventures program promotes experiential learning. Activities give members a chance to *explore*, *reflect on*, and *apply* knowledge.

Explore

Children explore and learn when they are involved in a hands-on activity. For example, a child might learn about color by mixing paints to create new colors.

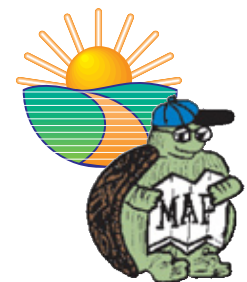
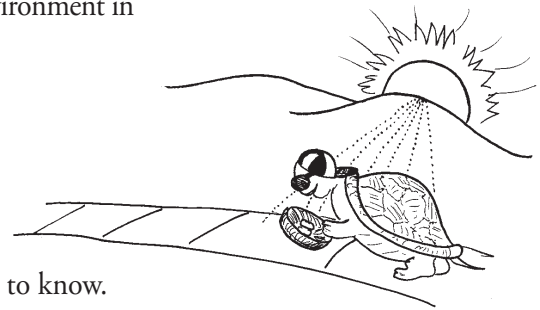
Reflect

Children reflect on an activity when they think about and then discuss the activity. You can encourage reflection by asking questions, such as:

- What did you observe when you mixed certain colors together?
- Why did different children get different results when they mixed the same colors together?

Apply

To complete the learning process, children must apply what they learn to their everyday lives. For example, to help them apply what they’ve learned, you can ask the children to think about how the colors on their bedroom walls were created.



Cooperative learning

Cooperation means that 4-H Adventures members work in small groups and depend on each other to accomplish goals. Cooperative learning encourages the development of social skills, teaches children to work together, and enhances self-esteem.

The development of positive self-esteem is particularly important for K–3 children. They are developing an awareness of their abilities and need opportunities to experience success. When young children are unsuccessful, they become discouraged about their abilities, their self-esteem lowers, and they become uninterested in learning.

A competitive environment decreases the opportunities for all members to experience success. Therefore, competition is not appropriate for K–3 children. Instead, 4-H Adventures promotes self-esteem and encourages young children to enjoy learning.

The following practices encourage cooperative learning.

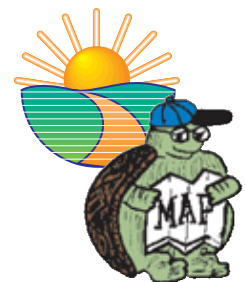
- ◆ Encourage children to talk and work with each other.
- ◆ Make sure that each and every member has something vital to contribute to the success of the group.
- ◆ Ensure that every group member is responsible for how he or she does as an individual as well as how the group does.
- ◆ Teach social skills (such as sharing, taking turns, and problem-solving).
- ◆ Give time for members to discuss their group effort.
- ◆ Model cooperation by sharing responsibility for planning, selecting, and carrying out activities with the children.

Planning meetings and activities

4-H Adventures leaders are encouraged to use their imagination when planning their meetings. Meetings may or may not follow a traditional 4-H club format. You may take field trips or encourage community service such as a food drive.

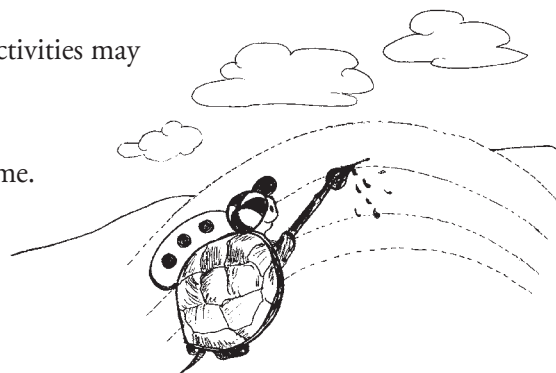
When developing or selecting activities for K–3 children, ask yourself the following questions.

- ◆ Are the learning opportunities designed for K–3 children?
- ◆ Are the activities fun and focused on general life skill areas such as self-understanding, social interaction, physical mastery, and decisionmaking?
- ◆ Does this activity use experiential learning?
- ◆ Do the activities promote success and self-esteem among all members?
- ◆ Are the children encouraged to interact in small groups?
- ◆ Is cooperation promoted?
- ◆ Is competition discouraged?
- ◆ Are the activities safe?
- ◆ Does the activity offer a variety of short-term experiences, lasting 20 minutes or less?



In addition, the following tips can help you ensure that your members have an enjoyable experience.

- ♦ Provide one adult or older youth for every six children. (Some activities may require more adult assistance.)
- ♦ Alternate “sit-down” and “moving” activities.
- ♦ Avoid talking to the group for longer than 5 to 10 minutes at a time.
- ♦ Include older youth as role models when possible.



Suggested 4-H Adventures meeting format

Opening

- Welcome each child as she or he arrives.
- Make time for children to play together informally.
- A snack is a great way to bring the group together before the learning activity begins.

Meeting

- Choose a way to begin the meeting, and use it routinely. You might start with the 4-H pledge followed by a song. You also could hold a discussion about the last meeting, encouraging the children to share their thoughts and feelings.
- Introduce and carry out the activity of the day.
- Monitor children closely. Watch for those who need extra help or who need more to do. Be prepared to do more or less, depending on the needs of the group.

Closing

- Allow time for members to help clean up.
- Review what the children have observed, learned, and/or made.
- Discuss plans for the next meeting.
- This also is a good time for a snack or a game, depending on the circumstances.

Recognizing 4-H Adventures members' learning

Two types of recognition are appropriate for 4-H Adventures members:

(1) participation and (2) cooperation.

- ♦ Recognizing **participation** in educational experiences acknowledges involvement as a first step in building a positive self-concept.
- ♦ Recognizing **cooperation** helps youth learn and work together, preparing them for living in today's interdependent, global society.

Recognizing participation

Encouragement is an important way that leaders can recognize members' participation. This can take place in club, family, and community settings. Encouragement lets children know that what they do is separate from who they are. It helps children identify their own strengths and build on them.



There are three steps to encouragement.

1. Describe with appreciation what you observe and feel.
2. Help children acknowledge their own efforts and skills.
3. Offer a short comment, such as “Good work!” For example, you could say “Wow, I really like watching you work hard on a project. What do you like about your work? Great job!”

Here are additional suggestions for recognizing participation.

- ♦ Be sure to give each child individual attention during each meeting.
- ♦ Ask each member to perform special tasks with you during the meeting.
- ♦ Share accomplishments with parents.

Recognizing cooperation

You can acknowledge cooperative behavior throughout the year. By attending to how your members work together and by acknowledging their cooperative efforts, you can support their social development.

Here are suggestions for recognizing cooperation.

- ♦ Be accepting of all, whether there is success or failure.
- ♦ Share enthusiasm about group achievements with the entire group.
- ♦ Celebrate the group’s successes at the end of the year by having a picnic or party.

County fair participation

County fairs also may provide an appropriate setting for recognition of learning, if display guidelines reflect a noncompetitive, cooperative framework. County fair activities for K–3 members should reflect the following developmentally appropriate elements.

- ♦ Incorporate collaborative rather than competitive learning.
- ♦ Provide an opportunity for children to experience success rather than failure.
- ♦ Give equal recognition to all participants.
- ♦ Emphasize the learning process rather than a final product.
- ♦ Accommodate young children’s short attention spans.

4-H Adventures resources

Curriculum materials

Children in grades K–3 are interested in all aspects of their world. For this reason, the 4-H Adventures program provides a wide variety of resources for volunteer leaders. Curricula resources are listed in *The Oregon 4-H Clover* (4-H 0230 and 4-H 0230-S, in Spanish).

Leaders are encouraged to use the curriculum materials offered for the 4-H Adventures program. These materials have been developed specifically for children in grades K–3. Some of these materials you can photocopy at your local Extension office. Other materials you can buy or get free through your local Extension office.



Additional resources

- Ames, L.B. and C.C. Haber. 1990. *Your eight-year-old: Lively and outgoing*. New York: Delta.
- Ames, L.B. and C.C. Haber. 1987. *Your seven-year-old: Life in a minor key*. New York: Dell.
- Ames, L.B. and F.L. Ilg. 1979. *Your six-year-old: Loving and defiant*. New York: Delta.
- Ames, L.B. and F.L. Ilg. 1979. *Your five-year-old: Sunny and serene*. New York: Delta.
- Bredekamp, S. and C. Copple, eds. 1997. *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Child Guidance Techniques* (PNW 64). Reprinted October 1993. This publication is available from your local Extension Family and Community Development agent; or, online at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pdf/pnw/pnw64.pdf>
- Goddard, H.W. *Principles of Parenting* series. Alabama Cooperative Extension System. Titles include:
- *Building Family Strengths*
 - *The Challenge of Being a Parent*
 - *Helping Your Children Succeed at Learning*
 - *Now That We're Divorced, How Can We Parent Together?*
 - *Raising Good Children: Helping Your Child Become a Moral Adult*
 - *Enjoying Each Child as an Individual*
 - *Being Understanding: A Key to Developing Healthy Children*
 - *Sending Messages of Love*
 - *Building a Positive Relationship with Your Child*
 - *Meeting Children's Needs*
 - *Communication: Building a Strong Bridge Between You and Your Children*
 - *Something Better Than Punishment*
- These publications are available from Alabama Cooperative Extension at <http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/indexes/hefcd.tmpl>
- Oregon State University Extension and Community Development offers a variety of resources to help strengthen families and parenting. Visit their Parents and Children website at: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/fcd/parentchild/>



4-H Traditions

4-H Colors

4-H colors are green and white. White symbolizes purity and green represents life, growth, and youth.

4-H Emblem

The green four-leaf clover has a white H on each leaf to represent each of the four H's: Head, Heart, Hands, and Health.

4-H Pledge

I pledge:

My head to clearer thinking,
My heart to greater loyalty,
My hands to larger service,
and
My health for better living,
For my Club, my Community,
my Country, and my World.

4-H Slogan

“Learning by Doing” is the way 4-H members acquire new skills and learn to get along with others.

4-H Motto

“To Make the Best Better” encourages members to improve themselves, their clubs, and their larger communities.



© 2002 Oregon State University

This publication was produced and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension work is a cooperative program of Oregon State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Oregon counties.

Oregon State University Extension Service offers educational programs, activities, and materials without discrimination based on age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran's status. Oregon State University Extension Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Revised July 2002. Reprinted October 2007.

