



HEADLINING 4-H

A Manual for 4-H Club Reporters



CONGRATULATIONS, REPORTER! And welcome to your new job.

Getting news of your club in the local paper is important. Many people and many businesses are interested in 4-H work. People who don't know about 4-H can learn about it by reading your stories.

Reporting is fun, too. You will never forget the thrill of seeing your first story in print.

What to write about

A news story is a written record of what happened or what will happen. It should be something interesting.

Here are some of the things that might be news—meetings, fairs, tours, picnics, camps, summer school, club elections, demonstrations, committees named, donations, projects, contest winners.

News and Minutes

What is the difference between a news story and the secretary's minutes? They both tell what happened. But they tell it very differently. The secretary writes down all the official business. The reporter writes what is interesting and important.

For instance, the secretary records that the meeting was called to order, the flag was raised, the 4-H pledge recited, the minutes of the last meeting read, and such matters. None of these things is put in a news story.

When you write a news story about a meeting, pick out the things that were different from other meetings of your club. Tell about the demonstration. Tell what the speaker said. Tell what the club voted to do.

Those things that are the same at every meeting don't have to be reported. Readers just take for granted that they are done at the meeting.

What to include

No matter what you are writing about, your stories should include certain facts. They are *Who*, *What*, *Where*, *When*, *Why*, and *How*.

Who tells who does something. It can be one person or a whole group.

What tells what they do. Maybe they gave a demonstration, or helped with a Red Cross campaign, or planted trees at the fairgrounds.

Where and *When* tell just that!

Why is the reason something is done. It doesn't always have to be included. But maybe your club is testing wells. Then you might want to explain that you're doing it to avoid illness from drinking bad water.

How means the way it is done.

How to write

Now that you know what facts to include, look at a meeting where Mary Nelson gave a demonstration and write a story about it.

Who—Mary Ann Nelson.

What—Told the Handy Pans 4-H Club how to make muffins.

Where—At the home of Frances Patterson.

When—Tuesday afternoon.

With this information, you could write the story like this:

"Mary Ann Nelson told the Handy Pans 4-H Club how to make muffins Tuesday afternoon. The club met at the home of Frances Patterson.

"'Stirring the batter too much can make tunnels in the muffins,' she said."

Or if you think what she said about making muffins is more interesting, you can write it this way:

“Stirring muffin batter too much can make tunnels inside muffins when they are baked,” Mary Ann Nelson told the Handy Pans 4-H Club Tuesday afternoon. She gave a demonstration on muffins at the home of Frances Patterson.”

Either way, this would be just the beginning of your story. You then go on to tell more about what she said about muffin making, and what else happened at the meeting.

Now look at another meeting where John Mason was elected president. Use these as your facts:

Who—John Mason.

What—Was elected president of the Rock Creek 4-H Health Club.

Where—At Rock Creek school.

When—Friday afternoon.

In this case, your story could begin like this:

“John Mason was elected president of the Rock Creek 4-H Health Club Friday afternoon. The club met at Rock Creek school.”

Then you can go on to tell who else was elected to the other offices, and anything more that happened.

In most stories, the first sentence or two will tell the story “in a nutshell.”

Helps for doing your best job

- Write your story as soon as you can—while it’s still fresh in your mind. Newspapers want stories while they’re still “news.”

- Keep your sentences short. They’ll be easier to read.

- Write facts—not what you think about something.

- Do not use words like “I” or “you” except in quotes.

- Spell names correctly.

- Be sure the name of your 4-H club is in the story. Say “The Busy Bakers 4-H club met Wednesday,” not “We met Wednesday.”

- Double space all your news stories—typed and handwritten. Remember, if the newspaper office cannot read your story, they can’t print it.