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4-H Walkabout

What is a 4-H Walkabout?

In Australia, the Walkabout is a "rite of passage" from adolescence to adulthood. A rite of passage is a ritual or a change in status for an individual. The Walkabout has been practiced for centuries by the aborigines who live in the semi-desert wilderness of Australia's outback. At the age of sixteen, aborigine boys are sent into the wilderness alone to undergo an endurance test which lasts six months. They build their own shelters, find and prepare food, maintain physical and mental health, and cope with the dangers of a hostile environment. The Walkabout for the aborigines is more a test of courage than of skill under real life conditions.

There are vast differences between the aborigines in Australia and our society. The 4-H Walkabout can be related to the subject matter and personal skills that young people have developed from being 4-H members. The 4-H Walkabout is an activity that will provide opportunities for members to prove what they can do. The Walkabout experience can be designed in a variety of ways, but it should include five basic challenges:

- adventure
- creativity
- volunteer service
- practical skills
- logical inquiry

In the 4-H program, the Walkabout has the following goals:

- improve self-concept and sense of personal responsibilities,
- practice individual and group decision making skills,
- focus on self-direction in the pursuit of goals,
- participate fully in activities which have real-life consequences, and
- strengthen community involvement.

The Walkabout can be a tremendous experience for members. They will interact with their peers, adults and young children. The Walkabout can enrich the relationship between the 4-H program and the community. The 4-H Walkabout program is conducted in three phases: Pre-Walkabout, Walkabout, and Post-Walkabout. This publication will describe the three phases and provide guidelines to design a Walkabout experience.

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A Note for Adults, Parents, and Walkabout Guides

The 4-H Walkabout is a project for advanced 4-H members. This publication is designed to describe the philosophy of the Walkabout experience and provide guidelines to design and implement a Walkabout experience. The three phases of the Walkabout will be described: Pre-Walkabout, Walkabout, and Post-Walkabout. With support, the 4-H Walkabout experience will help young adults become successful in directing their own pursuit of excellence.

Responsibilities of a Walkabout Guide

The members of the Walkabout committee are called Walkabout Guides. The first responsibility of a Walkabout Guide is to be committed to seeing youth succeed. Guides must have a genuine interest in youth and the contemporary issues they face. Their role is to enable youth--not just offer advice. Most importantly, from the moment people accept the responsibility of a Walkabout Guide, they must believe that they will learn more from the 4-H members than the members will learn from them.

The major responsibility is to meet regularly as a committee or individually with the 4-H member and offer guidance as they proceed through the Walkabout challenges. Other responsibilities of a Walkabout Guide may include planning for the public presentation and assisting in the Walkabout celebration.

Research done on the basic Walkabout theory states that action-based educational experiences contribute to improved self-image and positive attitudes toward social and political responsibilities. Studies also support the idea that youth who have a greater say in their own learning will reciprocate by demonstrating more positive social and political behaviors.

The Walkabout concept comes from Phi Delta Kappa, a professional education fraternity dedicated to the promotion and improvement of publicly supported and universally available education. A primary goal of Phi Delta Kappa is to promote research and to help educators use knowledge from the art and science of education to improve their teaching and supervision skills. The Center on Evaluation, Development, and Research, a part of Phi Delta Kappa, meets this goal as it searches for and shares new findings with fellow educators.

Why a 4-H Walkabout?

The reason for designing a self-directed learning experience is simple: Youth learn best when they respond to challenges that they know will directly affect their lives. They will challenge themselves to learn and function in independent and mature ways. Through the Walkabout program, 4-H members develop their own activities in such areas as adventure, creativity, volunteer service, practical skills, and logical inquiry. The accomplishment of these goals will lead to a smoother transition into adulthood and a lifetime of learning.

The challenges that are encouraged in the Walkabout program are a contrast to what a 4-H member or teenager would normally do. It is risk-taking behavior. Some educators think that there are fewer and fewer points of transition and that youth have not had risks to surmount. As a reaction, many young people seek risk situations--with drugs, sexual behavior or dangerous driving. The Walkabout provides a positive structure for risk situations which may reduce the need for unhealthy risk-taking activities.

At the conclusion of the Walkabout, the 4-H member shares their accomplishments with others and a celebration is held. The Walkabout celebration symbolizes the "rite of passage" from youth and school to adulthood and community life. It is a ritual or ceremony that should recognize the accomplishments and achievements of the 4-H members. A ritual is some formally structured occasion that has dramatic overtones and helps move the person on to a new level. A ritual can be as simple as a flag salute or a memorable one-time occasion like a baptism or a funeral. But all rituals or rites of passage have elements of drama in the them. The drama actually summarizes real events and relationships in the person's life, but it does so in a symbolic way.

Youth respond well to ritual and ceremony. Planners of the Walkabout ceremony and celebration need to consider the opportunity for drama and ritual that the 4-H member will remember with pride.



Tips for Success in the 4-H Walkabout

The following ideas will help you and your committee create a framework for your success in the Walkabout experience:

1. **Timetable:** A reasonable length of time to complete the Walkabout is three to six months. However, a timetable should be established that fits everyone's schedule. The timetable will include the findings of the committee, the pre-walkabout meeting, meetings to monitor progress during the Walkabout (approximately five), a final meeting to assess your accomplishments, a public presentation, and celebration.
2. **Selecting challenges:** A Walkabout experience may combine two or more of the challenge areas. Walkabout Guides should help weave the challenges together so they fit the members' interests and still meet the goals of the Walkabout program.
3. **Contracts:** With the help of Walkabout Guides, members decide what they will learn in each challenge area, how they will do it, and in what period of time. When members are certain what they want to do, they prepare a contract, share it with the committee for final review, and ask all the members of the committee to sign it.
4. **Walkabout meetings:** It is the responsibility of the 4-H member to contact the Walkabout Guides and schedule the meetings and location. It is helpful to schedule all future meetings at the pre-Walkabout meeting, so that everyone has the dates on their calendars. Monthly meetings with the Walkabout Committee are recommended. It is important to meet regularly to monitor progress. These meetings will also provide a goal for members to work toward. The committee will provide assistance and encouragement when needed.
5. **Start with a success:** If at all possible, members should try to report a success at the first Walkabout meeting. The committee may want to suggest some preliminary challenges so that more success follows.
6. **One of the most important elements of leadership is asking for help!**

Pre-Walkabout

Your 4-H Walkabout Committee

First, select a 4-H Walkabout committee to help you reach your goals. Your committee will help you accomplish your Walkabout goals and support you as you explore your capabilities. The people on your committee are called Walkabout Guides. They should be interested in helping others and enjoy working with older youth. They should be willing to help you when you are stuck, and ready to listen to your successes as well as your failures.

The committee should include a parent or guardian, a 4-H leader or Extension staff person, a peer, and one or two members of the community who have an interest in youth or have skills in one of the areas you are interested in. To be most effective, the committee should not have more than five members.

Pre-Walkabout Meeting

Next, plan for the Pre-Walkabout meeting with your committee. The goal of the pre-walkabout meeting is for you and your committee to get acquainted and identify the skills or competencies that they think reflect the transition from youth to adulthood. The skills should be suited to you and your community. Some of the basic skills or competencies you may identify in the pre-walkabout meeting are:

Pre-Walkabout Skills and Competencies

Personal Skills: Maintain physical and mental health; strengthen personality; develop principles for making moral choices; develop interpersonal relationships; develop intergroup relationships.

Life-Long Learning Skills: Read; write; compute; memorize; research, analyze, interpret; converse-listen; identify-assimilate.

Consumer Skills: Evaluate quantity and quality of goods; use consumer assistance agencies; understand tax exemption; understand provisions of standard insurance policies; compute interest rates; understand basic legal documents (contracts, warranties, bills of sale).

Citizenship Skills: Contribute to community activities; influence political affairs; locate community resources; cope with bureaucracies; identify with community, state, and national issues; understand basic principles of economic and government operations.

Career Skills: Plan for a career-vocation; understand the process of production and consumption; prepare job application forms; develop effective interviewing techniques; understand the meaning of inflation and wage; understand payroll deductions.

Leisure Time Skills: Develop avocational skills (non-sport); hobbies; acquire geographical, historical, ethnic perspectives; create something; enhance aesthetic appreciation; develop recreational skills (sports).

Family Skills: Understand legal and social responsibilities of parenting; plan for long range economic security; learn to deal with family crisis (divorce, illness, death, etc.); develop family activities; understand family planning.



Walkabout

The Walkabout is the series of learning activities you will explore on your path from youth and school to adulthood and community life. You will select, plan for and perform challenging activities in five areas which reflect adult skills and responsibilities. You decide upon the five 4-H Walkabout "challenges" and then they are reviewed for suggestions by your committee. The entire Walkabout should be completed in three to six months.

Selecting Challenges

At the Pre-Walkabout meeting talk with your committee about the experiences you have already had. This may include a memorable trip you have taken, a severe illness you once had, or a challenge you had and how you met the challenge. This will help you and the committee select challenges that will fit your interests. In most cases, you will have your 4-H projects and related experiences to draw from, but think of other areas of interest, too. Ask yourself:

What have I done that I consider to be high adventure?
What volunteer service have I performed in my own community?
In what ways have I been creative?
What practical skills can I perform with reasonable competency?
Have I ever made any kind of in-depth study? What am I good at?

You probably don't realize that what you have done is valuable or creative in a personal way. This exercise will help you point to something with pride and say, "I did that," or give you a reason to pursue certain activities with enthusiasm.

Selecting challenges for the Walkabout may be the most difficult part of the 4-H Walkabout experience. Challenges should be interesting and exciting to you. They should have an element of risk, or the development of skills that are now unfamiliar to you. There should be the possibility for success or failure. The challenges should be dramatic and emphasize your individual performance of skills.

Complete the contract provided in this publication for each of the Walkabout challenges you choose to do. You can determine all five of the challenges at one time and meet with your committee to approve the total contract. Or you may select your Walkabout challenges over a period of three to six months and get approval for each challenge as you progress. Either way, your committee should meet with you as a group rather than individually so that you can get the benefit of support from the total group.

4-H Walkabout Challenge Areas and Examples

Adventure

(or the development of skills in an unfamiliar environment)

Participate in a "ropes course" experience at the Oregon 4-H Education and Conference Center

Camp/canoe/backpack in a wilderness area

Run in a marathon race

Bicycle across the state to support a cause

Creativity

Direct a talent show featuring youth

Write a script for a puppet show about nutrition and fitness

Learn about photography or film making

Work with a disc jockey on the radio

Learn to play a musical instrument

Volunteer Service

Work at a nursing home or shelter for AIDS victims

Help with a safety class for young children starting school

Conduct a community food drive for families in need

Start a seat belt safety campaign in your high school

Practical Skills

Plant and maintain a small orchard

Remodel a room for a member of your family

Fill out the family income tax form

Tune-up an engine

Logical Inquiry

Investigate childcare options in your community

Conduct a water quality study

Research the employment opportunities for youth in your area

Research and prepare the food equal to the diet of a young person in a developing country

Remember that you must take responsibility for the challenges you select and your pursuit of excellence to meet those challenges. The challenge must not be so ambitious that you have no hope of achieving the goal, but the challenge must not be so modest that you can fulfill it without any effort.

Post-Walkabout

From the moment you begin the Walkabout, you should realize that whatever you accomplish you will demonstrate or present before an audience. They may be other 4-H members, 4-H leaders, teachers, relatives, friends, and/or members of the community who have been part of your Walkabout experience. Your committee should help you plan for this public presentation of your Walkabout experience. They could give you suggestions for sharing your experience with others in a unique way.

During this presentation to others you should describe the challenges you set for yourself and the achievements that resulted. This may be modeling clothes you designed or tailored, showing slides of a summer cabin you designed and built, showing a videotape of your early dancing performance and a performance after months of practice, or taking an engine apart and reassembling it.

If there are other 4-H members completing a Walkabout at the same time, your Extension agent may want to plan a public program to highlight each of you and your accomplishments and promote the Walkabout program. Each of you should be given an opportunity to demonstrate your unique accomplishments in your own way.

Celebrating Your Accomplishments

Your public presentation is completed by a ceremony in which your committee, family, Extension agent and community celebrate your achievements and welcome you into the world of adulthood. Your parents and your Walkabout committee should help plan this celebration so it is a memorable occasion for you. This celebration concludes the 4-H Walkabout and recognizes your transition from adolescence to adulthood. You can take pride in making a true contribution to your life.



4-H Walkabout Challenge Contract

I understand the fundamental principles of the 4-H Walkabout experience are personal challenge, individual and group decision making, self-direction in the pursuit of goals, participation in activities which have real-life consequences, and community involvement. To satisfy the goals of the 4-H Walkabout experience and help me make the transition from youth to adulthood, I agree to fulfill the following challenges.

1. To meet the adventure challenge, my goal is to _____

Target date for completion: _____ Completed _____

2. To meet the creativity challenge, I will _____

Target date for completion: _____ Completed _____

3. To meet the volunteer service challenge, I will _____

Target date for completion: _____ Completed _____

4. To meet the practical skills challenge, I will _____

Target date for completion: _____ Completed _____

5. To meet the logical inquiry challenge, I will _____

Target date for completion: _____ Completed _____

Signed _____
4-H Member

Walkabout Committee Members Signatures

Steps to Complete Your 4-H Walkabout

Date Completed

Pre-Walkabout

Select Walkabout Committee

Schedule Pre-Walkabout Meeting

Hold Pre-Walkabout Meeting

Determine Skills and Competencies

Select Challenges

Committee Reviews and Signs Contract

Walkabout

Begin Walkabout Challenges

Progress Meetings

Complete Walkabout Challenges

Hold Final Walkabout Meeting

Post-Walkabout

Walkabout Public Presentation

Walkabout Celebration!

Write It Down...For Easy Reference

Name of 4-H Member _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Members of Walkabout Committee

Title/relationship

Telephone

Date/Time

Pre-Walkabout Meeting

Progress Meetings

Final Walkabout Meeting

Walkabout Public Presentation

Walkabout Celebration
