



Making 4-H Meetings Exciting

A guide for leaders

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Often it becomes a challenge for 4-H leaders to plan exciting, involving meetings. Variety in activities will help make 4-H meetings educational and enrich the 4-H experience for club members. Active club programs help create interest and provide inspiration and stimulation for members to learn through new experiences. There are many ways to incorporate active, fun learning into the 4-H club experience.

- Some 4-H clubs have business meetings on a monthly basis and project meetings in between.
- Some 4-H clubs have business meetings as a part of project meetings on an "as needed" basis.
- Some 4-H clubs plan educational field trips and activities (such as tours, guest speakers, family socials, judging activities, etc.) separate from business or project meetings.

How your 4-H club is organized and the activities you participate in are determined by the club leaders, members, and parents. You may want to appoint a program planning committee to help develop your club calendar for the year.

This committee should be appointed early in the club year. The *4-H Club Planning Worksheet* (4-H 0241L) is a helpful tool. It is available from your county office of the Oregon State University Extension Service.

Examples of 4-H club programs

When planning 4-H club programs, be sure to incorporate some variety in learning experiences. New and different experiences arouse interest and attention in youth of all ages. Following are some examples of 4-H club programs that you and your program planning committee may want to consider.

Parents' night. Ask the parents of your club officers (or others) to be in charge of one program. It may be serious or on the humorous side.

Club exchange. The entire club from one area visits another club. The visiting club usually presents the program. It may be helpful for a new club to visit an experienced club to become more familiar with the club meeting process.

Officer experience night. Younger 4-H members "hold an office" at one meeting and are "coached" by club officers and junior/teen leaders. This provides an opportunity for members to "try out" an office that they may want to run for later.

Future 4-H'er night. Invite prospective 4-H members and their parents to the meeting, have prospective 4-H members involved as "helpers" for officers, demonstrators, etc.

Community program. Involve local elected officials or presidents of community organizations to introduce them to 4-H via talks, skits, presentations, judging, etc. Ask them to talk about their organization, too.

Club family picnic or campout. Hold the meeting during a family picnic or campout night with program emphasis on nature and conservation.

Office nomination/campaign/election/installation. Promote citizenship by having members "declare" intentions for various offices, then "campaign" like a political convention, hold election by ballot, secure a voting booth from county officials, and have officers "sworn in" with an impressive ceremony.

Social events surrounding holidays. Example: Thanksgiving, Halloween, Christmas, or Valentine's Day, with the entire program centered around that holiday's theme. Be sure to invite and involve the whole family.

Citizenship night. Have a "Know Your State Government" delegate give a speech or a flag ceremony. Invite a county government official to talk about his/her job.

4-H awards trip winners. Invite delegates to National 4-H Congress, the Washington, D.C. trips, or judging trips to give a "pep talk" to your club.

Project tour and club activity. Hold your club's meeting in connection with a project tour, picnic, or swimming party.

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Family “favorite game” night. Have members and their families bring a favorite game to the club meeting. It’s best to have games that can be played at least once in a 30-minute time span. Playing together may help members learn to work together.

Presentation night. Have members who are preparing for county presentation competition present their demonstrations or speeches. Invite an “outside” judge to give feedback. You might also have a presentation on “How to Give a Demonstration” given by an experienced member.

4-H graduation. Plan an impressive ceremony or a “This is Your 4-H Life” theme for a graduating 4-H member, followed by refreshments. This would also be a good time to invite the whole family.

Member initiation. Plan a fun, positive ceremony carried out by junior/teen leaders to welcome new members. Be sure it is positive and that each child is made to feel an important part of the group.

Local club achievement night. Have each 4-H member exhibit the results of his/her projects and discuss and encourage enrollment in that project. This activity could be held in the fall when members are making project choices.

All-club judging night. Each member in the club brings a judging class representing his/her project; for example, clothing—a class of seams or scissors; wood-working—hammers, fasteners, etc.; beef—halters, brushes, etc. Use official judging cards and have members, leaders, parents, and guests judge each class. Talk about the classes and placings. This is also a good way to introduce new projects to 4-H members.

Other ideas for fun and educational 4-H club programs: _____

Suggested speakers for club programs

law enforcement official
animal breed association representative
Red Cross representative
blood bank staff member
county health nurse
county 4-H Leaders Council officer
Department of Fish and Game personnel
forestry staff member
volunteer or paid firefighter
County Commissioner
junior leader club representative
State or County Fair board member
retired citizen
probation officer
service club and fraternal order member
exchange student
local business owner
county agent of the OSU Extension Service

In the 4-H program we are working with a wide range of youth from many different backgrounds, and with different skills and abilities. From research and everyday observations we can readily determine that a flexible and varied program is necessary to meet the various needs of youth.

As a 4-H leader you need to determine, with your club, what you are trying to accomplish (goal setting) and what experiences you are providing to meet those goals. You may need to help your program planning committee understand those goals as they identify programs for their yearly 4-H club calendar.

Other ideas for fun and educational 4-H club speakers: _____

Remember: plan, participate, review, and evaluate**1. Plan**

Thorough planning is the key to successful 4-H programs. Ask yourself: Is this program necessary? Does it have a purpose? What do we hope to gain? A special program or speaker is a method of teaching—an opportunity to learn. A program that results from the desire to see, do, and learn is most effective. A special program should help accomplish the goals of your club.

Who plans a special club program? Remember that interest and learning result from involvement. Therefore, the club members should be involved in planning and making arrangements. For a club of junior members (grades 4-6) the leader and parents may need to make some of the arrangements. For a large club program or activity you may want to have several subcommittees to plan and arrange for special set-up needs, food, publicity, etc.

At the meeting prior to a special program or guest speaker, announce and explain the upcoming program. Members and parents should know what they will see, hear, and learn. This stimulates interest and sets the stage for better understanding, appropriate questions, and greater learning.

Be sure to publicize a special program before it occurs. A news story alerts the community to what 4-H is doing and stimulates interest. You may also want to have a phone committee call members to remind them of special programs.

2. Participate

Meet at the scheduled time and place. Check to see that everyone is present and comfortable, and has what he or she needs.

Be sure to have someone appointed to introduce a guest speaker at the beginning of the program and thank the speaker at the end. If additional family members are

attending, take the time for 4-H members to introduce them to the club. This is important in making family members feel a part of the activity.

Avoid distractions. People learn best when they are comfortable. Allow participants to be seated when practical. Have a loudspeaker or portable PA system available if needed.

Encourage everyone to participate in activities. Handle conduct problems courteously, firmly, and promptly. At the end of the program, give participants a chance to ask questions.

3. Review and evaluate

At the next club meeting, review what was learned at the program. Encourage club members to tell what they liked about the program and what they learned that was new. Help them understand the program and how it relates to them. This will help to reinforce the learning process.

Have your program planning committee send thank-you letters to the speaker, host, and others who helped out. Writing thank-you letters can help club members develop the habit of expressing appreciation. Sometimes letters should be written by each member. Other times, letters can be written by a committee chair and signed by all members. As club leader, you, too, may want to write to a special speaker expressing your appreciation.

A follow-up news story about the program may be very appropriate. Include this story (or the highlights) in the secretary's book or club scrapbook, as it will be helpful in planning future club programs. Also include those things you would like to change or do differently next time.

Good 4-H club programs don't just happen automatically. They take discussion, involvement, and planning. Work with your members and their parents to develop a variety of interesting, fun, and educational programs for your 4-H club. Learning can be fun!

The Oregon State University Extension Service educates Oregonians by delivering research-based, objective information to help them solve problems, develop leadership, and manage resources wisely.

Extension's 4-H/youth program assists young people, their families, and adult volunteers to become productive and self-directing by developing their practical skills and knowledge. Professionals and volunteers together provide educational projects and activities in animal science, home economics, engineering, natural resources, and expressive arts.

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