



4-H
ADVENTURES

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Family Guide

Welcome to the Oregon 4-H Adventures Program.

4-H Adventures is an informal educational program designed for children in grades K-3. The 4-H Adventures program encourages children to have fun, develop friendships, and learn about their world. The program also aims to strengthen ties among children, families, and their larger communities.

Parents, grandparents, and other family members are encouraged to participate in the 4-H Adventures program in a variety of ways. Volunteering to bring snacks, arrange field trips, and assist in meetings are a few of the ways that family members can help 4-H Adventures clubs. Family members can support their children by supporting club leaders and activities. Some family members may want to take an active role in leading club activities. Also, children can continue learning through take-home activities provided in the program.

The following guide will help you understand the 4-H Adventures program. We also hope the guide will give you fresh insights and research-based child development practices

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that you can use to build upon the knowledge you already have. These practices are shared with 4-H Adventures leaders as well. Together, leaders, parents, and other family members can help young children grow to become happy, healthy, and productive adults.

The name "4-H Adventures" reflects the excitement and wonder children bring to learning. To young children, life is an adventure! We hope the 4-H Adventures program will foster this spirit of adventure within your family.

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 serves 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



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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

Through participation in 4-H Adventures, members will develop:

- ♦ A positive self-concept
- ♦ Life skills that enhance self-understanding, social interaction, decision-making, 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 stepparents. Also, some children have adoptive parents and others have biological ones. It is important to respect all families.

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

The 4-H Adventures program is grounded in child development research. The following is an overview of what research has taught us about young children.

The information in this section summarizes the most common developmental path that

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.

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 of 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

The 4-H Adventures program aims to promote young children's development by supporting relationships between members and leaders and between parents and their children. Both parents and leaders are interested in promoting the development of children. Together, they can better help children become caring, well-educated adults.



Parents and leaders need many similar skills to help children develop well. The following research-based practices are offered to leaders. They also can be helpful to parents. This information is drawn from a variety of Extension and other sources (see “For more information,” page 7).

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. This balance is best for young children’s development.

The following examples can help both leaders and parents guide children 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. Here 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, give them something to play with or change the activity they are doing. 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 guiding children.

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.

Support your child's learning

The 4-H Adventures program uses a child-centered approach that includes not only the materials used to teach young children but also the environment in which they are taught. Understanding the 4-H learning model will help you support your child's learning in 4-H Adventures and may help you teach her or him at home.

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.

Reflect

Children reflect on an activity when they think about and then discuss the activity.

Apply

To complete the learning process, children must apply what they learn to their everyday lives.

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 through a cooperative approach.

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 parents can recognize their child's 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!"

Recognizing cooperation

You can support your child's club by recognizing cooperative behavior among the children. Watch how your child works together with other children, and acknowledge her or his cooperative efforts.

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.

For more information

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.

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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 county Extension Family and Community Development agent.

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 Oregon State University's Extension Family and Community Development staff at (541) 737-1014.

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 County, 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.



18 U.S.C. 707

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