

# So You Want to Start a 4-H Club?



Here's what you need to  
know...

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# What is 4-H?

4-H is the youth development outreach program of the Land Grant Universities, the Cooperative Extension System, and USDA. It is made up of a community of young people across America who are learning life skills and are supported in this developmental process by caring adult leaders. 4-H'ers are actively involved in educational projects that are fun and that use quality curriculum incorporating the most current research and knowledge available through the Land Grant University system. 4-H youth:

- ✿ Have fun
- ✿ Meet new people
- ✿ Learn and do new things
- ✿ Gain life skills
- ✿ Build self-confidence
- ✿ Practice responsibility
- ✿ Set and achieve goals
- ✿ Receive recognition for their efforts and accomplishments



## **Why Participating in a Youth Development Program is Important:**

The goal of youth development programs is to help youth become fully prepared for transition to adulthood. Youth development professionals offer youth opportunities within healthy environments to master the competencies they will need to make this transition. In order to master skills, research has shown that young people must have certain needs met such as:

- ✿ safety and structure
- ✿ a sense of belonging and membership
- ✿ closeness and several good relationships
- ✿ experience with gaining competence and mastering skills
- ✿ independence and control over some part of their lives
- ✿ self-awareness and the ability and opportunities to act on that understanding
- ✿ a sense of self-worth and the ability and opportunities to contribute

***4-H clubs and activities provide youth opportunities to meet these critical needs.***

# What makes 4-H different?

- ✿ As one of the first youth development organizations in America, 4-H opened the door for young people to learn leadership skills and explore ways to give back to their community. 4-H revolutionized how youth connected to practical, hands-on learning experiences while outside of the classroom.
- ✿ 4-H is the largest youth serving organization with over 6.5 million participants nationally.
- ✿ 4-H clubs have been active in the United States for over 100 years. It is now world-wide.
- ✿ 4-H offers over 200 projects and activities for youth to choose from ranging from animals and agriculture, to science and technology.
- ✿ 4-H programs, curricula, and procedures are based in research and are developmentally (age) appropriate.
- ✿ 4-H programs are based on the needs of youth and their parents.
- ✿ 4-H provides access to resources of Land Grant University Cooperative Extension Systems.
- ✿ 4-H provides members access to county, state and national 4-H opportunities.
- ✿ 4-H membership is open to all youth ages 5 – 18, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or religious background.
- ✿ 4-H program delivery employs experiential learning strategies.
- ✿ 4-H encourages active involvement and participation by youth and adults in all aspects.
- ✿ 4-H relies heavily on youth and adult volunteer leaders to provide a critical support system for 4-H.
- ✿ 4-H provides quality training for volunteer leaders recognizing that training is essential for effective 4-H programs.
- ✿ 4-H adapts to and supports mobility of youth and parents.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Research has shown that:

- ✿ Active 4-H members are 50% less likely than non-4-H members to smoke cigarettes, shoplift, or use illegal drugs?
- ✿ Active 4-H members are 20% more likely to hold a leadership position in their school or community than non-4-H members?
- ✿ Active 4-H members are 24% more likely to get involved in projects that “help others” than are non-4-H members?
- ✿ Active 4-H members are 65% more likely than non-4-H members to have held conversations with an adult (other than a parent) that lasted 10 minutes or more the past month.
- ✿ 40% of 4-H alumni have completed a university degree, compared to 28% nationwide.

# What is a 4-H Club?

4-H Clubs are the most traditional and effective delivery mode of 4-H programming to youth. Club meetings are learning “laboratories” where members develop social skills including communicating and working with others, practice leadership skills, develop strong character, and become responsible citizens by participating in community service activities. It’s a wonderful way for youth to become exposed to new and exciting experiences and activities in a safe and familiar environment.

## What are the requirements for a 4-H Club?

- ✿ A club consists of at least 5 enrolled youth members, ages 5-18. (Special project clubs may have age limits based on programming. For instance, Cloverbud Clubs cater to youth ages 5-8 and a Shooting Sports Club has an age requirement of 10 and up.)
- ✿ Clubs are guided by trained, adult volunteer leaders that are supported by the county 4-H Agent.
- ✿ It has a planned program that is ongoing throughout all or most of the year. (Some clubs take summers off.)
- ✿ Clubs need to offer opportunities for youth to learn important life skills like leadership by electing club officers and citizenship by conducting community service projects.
- ✿ Clubs meet in a safe environment. Many clubs meet at the leader’s home, a community building, church or other appropriate location.
- ✿ Clubs will become chartered annually.
- ✿ Clubs are responsible for their own finances.

# Becoming a 4-H Volunteer

Community volunteers are the backbone for a successful county 4-H program. They have an important role in encouraging and guiding youth in learning important life skills and development. Because of their direct involvement with youth, an application process is required by the state. It includes:

- ✿ Criminal Background Screening
- ✿ State 4-H Volunteer Agreement and Standards of Behavior
- ✿ Photo Release Agreement
- ✿ Face to Face Interview with 4-H Agent



Upon application approval, the county 4-H Agent will schedule a volunteer leader training to help get you started with your club. Training will include, but is not limited to: important policies and guidelines that will need to be followed, learning how to charter your club, understanding financial responsibilities of clubs, and program/curriculum offerings. You will work very closely with your county 4-H agent and will be connected to other county club leaders for additional support throughout the year. You will also have the opportunity to participate in district and state volunteer leader association meetings and to further your knowledge and experience in 4-H programming and activities that you can bring back to your members.

# Roles & Responsibilities

## **4-H Club Leader**

- ✿ Serve as the first contact for the club
- ✿ Communicate openly with county 4-H Agent about club plans & needs
- ✿ Ensure 4-Hers are being recognized
- ✿ Discuss agenda with officers prior to each business meeting
- ✿ Make arrangements for meetings
- ✿ Ensure supplies and materials are available
- ✿ Assist youth in developing life and project related skills

## **Club Officers**

- ✿ Provide leadership for 4-H Club
- ✿ Work with 4-H Club Leader to plan meetings and programs
- ✿ Conduct 4-H business meetings
- ✿ Represent club at County Council meetings
- ✿ Promote 4-H to other youth
- ✿ Mentor younger members

## **Youth Members**

- ✿ Actively participate in meetings and activities
- ✿ Provide input into 4-H club and project offerings
- ✿ Carry out responsibilities as needed by the group
- ✿ Interact with other members of the group
- ✿ Gain skills leading to competence
- ✿ Promote 4-H to other youth

## **Parents**

- ✿ Volunteer to assist with 4-H projects and activities
- ✿ Provide transportation for members to 4-H activities
- ✿ Attend and support club meetings and activities
- ✿ Encourage participation in 4-H program

## **4-H Agent**

- ✿ Recruit volunteers for 4-H clubs.
- ✿ Provide volunteer leader and club officer training
- ✿ Have open communication with volunteer leaders to keep them informed on county, district and state level programs and activities.
- ✿ Provide support to clubs
- ✿ Help market clubs for new membership
- ✿ Recognize clubs, members, and leaders for their achievements
- ✿ Share 4-H curriculum options
- ✿ Assist youth in developing life and project related skills

# Getting Started

Before you start a club, you need to decide:

- ✿ What is the need for a club in your community and how can a club help that need
- ✿ Will the club be project-based or general
- ✿ How many meetings do you want to host per month/year (and when – day and time)
- ✿ Where will your club meet
- ✿ Are there other parents or adults willing to assist with your club (as needed)

Steps in Establishing a 4-H Club:

- ✿ Contact the county 4-H Agent and fill out application.
- ✿ Attend 4-H Volunteer/Leader Training/Meeting (scheduled by the 4-H Agent) and become familiar with county and state 4-H policies and guidelines.
- ✿ Recruit potential club members (and possibly other qualified adults/teens that can assist)
- ✿ Set a date, time, and location for the first organization meeting.
- ✿ Notify 4-H Agent of date, time, and location of first meeting so they can attend.

## Initial Club Meeting Goals

First Club Meeting Goals (Informal but Informational)

- ✿ Introduction to 4-H
- ✿ Members fill out enrollment documents and turn them in
- ✿ Decide on when and how often you want to meet
- ✿ Decide on club name
- ✿ Discuss officer roles



Second Club Meeting Goals (Planning)

- ✿ Elect officers
- ✿ Set goals for club
- ✿ Plan out club calendar (for at least next 6 months)
- ✿ Begin club chartering process

## Basic Club Meeting Outline

- ✿ Pre-meeting - Bridges the gap between the time members begin to arrive & the time the meeting begins. (Can be either activities or refreshments)
- ✿ Business portion (10-15 minutes) – Members learn how to conduct a meeting and practice democratic decision-making.
- ✿ Educational Program (30-45 minutes) – Usually project work, but may involve special presentations or activities conducted by resource people, parents, or older members.
- ✿ Recreation/Refreshments (15-20 minutes) – Provides members an opportunity to develop and practice social skills.

Involve youth as much as possible. Make it THEIR club!

# 4-H Facts

## 4-H Colors

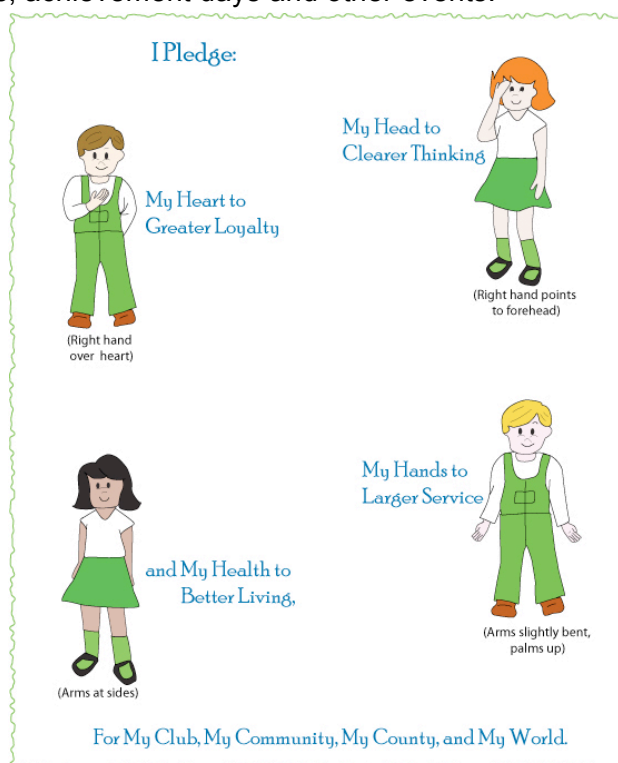
The 4-H colors are green and white. The white symbolizes purity and high ideals. The green represents growth, life, and youth.

## The Four H's

The four H's stand for Head, Heart, Hands, and Health, which represent the domains of youth development. Early symbols of the organization contained only three H's – for Head, Heart, and Hands. In 1911, club leaders from across the country met in Washington, D.C. and adopted a committee recommendation to add Hustle as a fourth H. O.B. Martin, who was directing club work in the South, is credited with suggesting that the four H's stand for Head, Heart, Hands, and Health.

## 4-H Pledge

The pledge tells what 4-H is all about: The four-fold development of youth. Delegates to the 1927 National 4-H Club Camp in Washington, D.C. adopted the pledge, and state club leaders voted for and adopted the pledge for universal use. The phrase, "and my World" was added to the pledge in 1973. The saying of the pledge has a prominent place at 4-H Club meetings, achievement days and other events.



## 4-H Motto

The 4-H motto, "To make the best better," was proposed by Carrie Harrison, a botanist with the U.S. Bureau of Plant Industry, and adopted in 1927 along with the 4-H pledge.

## 4-H Emblem

The official 4-H emblem is a green four-leaf clover with the letter H on each leaf. Because of its historical importance, the 4-H emblem has a special status; it is federally protected under the U.S. Code (Section 18 USC 707) and belongs to Congress. Federal legislation regulates use of the 4-H name and emblem. Chartered clubs have permission to use the emblem and consider themselves "4-H Clubs."



To learn more about becoming a 4-H Club Leader,  
please contact your county 4-H Agent for more details  
and to set up training:

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