



WELCOME TO 4-H:

A New Family's Guide



K-STATE
Research and Extension

WELCOME TO 4-H

4-H members and leaders live across Kansas, in all 50 states and in 82 other countries around the world. Members are 7-18 years old, and live in cities, towns and farms. There are more than 17,000 4-H members in community clubs across Kansas, and we're glad to welcome you and your family as our newest members.

4-H is focused on youth having fun and learning with their friends. We understand that you may have many questions your first few years in the program, so we developed this guide to help. Also, you can always call your 4-H community club leader or your local extension agent for help.

The basic philosophy of 4-H is to strengthen the mental, physical, moral and social development of boys and girls, thereby, helping develop effective citizens and leaders. We do this through participation in projects, events and other various activities.



EMBLEM, COLORS, PLEDGE, MOTTO:

The four-leaf clover is the official 4-H emblem. The four H's stand for **head**, **heart**, **hands** and **health**. Our colors are green — signifying life, springtime and youth — and white, signifying fresh and clean.



THE 4-H PLEDGE IS:

I PLEDGE

My Head to clearing thinking,
My Heart to greater loyalty,
My Hands to larger service,
My Health to better living,

For my club, my community, my country and my world.

The 4-H motto is “To make the best better.” Our members and volunteers learn the pledge and use it in their daily lives. The motto is there to remind us to always strive for improvement, to continually set goals and give every effort your best.

HOW DID 4-H BEGIN?

4-H began in the early 1900s. Girls participated in canning clubs, and boys participated in corn and pig clubs. In 1914, Congress passed an act establishing Cooperative Extension and 4-H across the country. Corn, poultry and garden clubs existed in Kansas as early as 1905.

4-H has certainly changed since its early days. While we are proud of our rich history, we’ve expanded to include members from more than just rural backgrounds. We’ve evolved to meet the needs of today’s youth, and develop learning experiences for boys and girls of all ages.

4-H MEMBERSHIP AND PROGRAMS

4-H members must be at least 7 years old and not have had their 19th birthday by January 1 of the current year. Members live in towns, in the country and on farms, and is open to all youth regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or disability. The 4-H year runs from October 1 thru September 30.

Available 4-H programs include:

- **4-H Community Clubs:** A group of youth with one or more leaders under the sponsorship of K-State Research and Extension. Most clubs hold monthly meetings with a planned program. Club activities can include demonstrations, project work, community service and social events.
- **4-H Cloverbuds:** A group of 5- and 6-year-olds who learn cooperatively. Some 4-H Cloverbuds may meet monthly to non-competitive activities that are developmentally and age appropriate.
- **SPIN Clubs:** A SPecial INterest Club is a group of youth with one or more leaders under the sponsorship of K-State Research and Extension. This is a short term group, meeting only 6-8 times, and they focus on one topic of interest.
- **School Enrichment:** A learning experience presented or coordinated by extension personnel with school officials as part of school classroom activities.



WHO HELPS IN 4-H?

At its roots, 4-H is a family program. Parents and family help members with project work and other activities. 4-H members are also helped by volunteer leaders. Each club needs one or more adult leaders. These leaders teach, organize the club, help officers, assist at meetings and orient new parents.

There are various kinds of leaders in 4-H:

- **Community Club Leaders:** Responsible for the general club organization.
- **Project Leader:** Helps members with their project work.
- **Junior Leaders:** 4-H teens who work with an adult leader to give leadership to activities, events and/or projects.
- **Parents:** Show interest and concern for their children by attending meetings, serving as leaders, helping in club activities and serving on committees.

All registered volunteers go through a screening process and attend an orientation training. This process ensures protection for both 4-H members and adult volunteers.

WHAT DO YOU DO IN 4-H?

In 4-H, youth learn by doing. Youth learn useful skills, teamwork and how to serve your community and country. Here are examples of activities:

Project work: Choose at least one project or area of interest per year.

Demonstrations: Learn to share what you have learned with others.

Recreation: Play games and make new friends.

Community service: Improve your community.

County contests: Choose to enter contests and compete against other members.

Exhibits: Show your best project work at the county fair.

Camps: Participate in a day camp, overnight camp, or camps on the K-State campus.

Exchanges: Learn about the life of other 4-H members from across the state and across the country.

State Events: Strengthen your leadership and citizenship skills while making friends from across the state.

CLUB MEETINGS

4-H members are given the opportunity to learn and practice decision making in group situations. Members are expected to attend their club's gatherings, and parents are encouraged to attend as well, as 4-H is a family affair.

There are generally two types of club gatherings. However, each club is unique and there are many ways a club might decide to structure their meetings.

- I. Club meetings: Members plan and carry out what they want to do as a group. A good club meeting has four parts with defined activities:
 - a. Opening: Call to order, Pledge of Allegiance and 4-H Pledge
 - b. Business: Roll call, secretary's report, treasurer's report, committee reports, old business, and new business
 - c. Education: Program, demonstrations and guest speakers
 - d. Fun: Recreation, songs, skits, refreshments and entertainment
2. Project Meetings: Members work together on their projects. Meetings can include guest speakers, field trips and activities.

WHAT DO CLUB OFFICERS DO?

4-H Club officers are elected by members. Each officer has a specific job.

President	Presides over the business meeting, keeping members involved and discussions organized.
Vice President	The vice president leads in the president's absence, introduces guests, and is the program chair.
Secretary	The secretary writes meeting notes, keeps attendance records, maintains the secretary's book and keeps track of all communications.
Treasurer	The treasurer takes care of the club money, pays bills, keeps an accurate account of the club's finances and reports at each club meeting and prepares the annual financial review.
Reporter	The reporter sends news stories to local newspapers and/or radio stations and plans social media platforms.
Recreation	The recreation leader leads games and other fun activities.
Song Leader	The song leader leads the group in singing.
Committee Chairs	Your club may have several committees, depending on the club size and focus. Committees may include: program, membership, recreation, community service, fundraising and social events.

PROJECT WORK

As a 4-H member, youth choose at least one project to complete. Choose a project that fits into your family, community and lifestyle. Projects provide the basis of the 4-H program by offering various education experiences. Carrying out a project helps members learn by doing, make sound decisions, and master a subject matter. There are more than 35 different projects options, and several levels, allowing a member to advance their skills.

4-H competitive events and fairs provide opportunities to have their project work judged against a set of standards. Exhibit evaluations are meant to be a positive and motivating part of the total 4-H experience. The exhibit is not an end in itself, nor does it illustrate all of the learning that has taken place during the 4-H year.



DANISH SYSTEM

The Danish system of judging is a method of evaluation in which a 4-H exhibit or process is evaluated against a set of standards and awarded on the degree to which the standard has been met. The standards of excellence are often printed on a judge's scorecard, and allows for the 4-H exhibit to be judged on one's own merit, and not in comparison with others in the class. The following ribbons apply:

WHITE: Fair, denotes much improvement needed. Fails to meet minimum standards.

RED: Good, some improvements needed. Meets minimum standards.

BLUE: Excellent, minor improvements needed. Exceeds minimum standards.

PURPLE: Superior, outstanding on all standards.

Remember that when you exhibit at the county fair, you are asking for the judge's opinion. The judge's opinion is just that: an opinion, and it can vary from judge to judge and day to day. It is an opportunity to explain what you have learned, and it is an opportunity to learn from an expert. Each project is a success, no matter what color the ribbon may be!

CAMPS

Many 4-H members attend camps to take part in educational and recreational experiences as they learn about nature and living with other people. Most importantly, 4-H'ers have fun at camp!

- **4-H Camps:** Youth may attend 4-H Camp at the Rock Springs 4-H Center, south of Junction City. Older teens are also given the chance to serve as counselors to the younger campers. Activities include hiking, fishing, campfires, flag ceremonies, swimming, crafts, recreation and more! Camping opportunities vary by local unit; contact your local Extension Agent to find out more.
- **Discovery Days:** For older teens, this leadership conference is a chance to experience college life on the Kansas State University campus, exploring career interests and strengthening your leadership and communication skills. Enjoy plenty of chances to meet teens from across the state while you live in the dorms, attend "classes," and socialize at the dance and ice cream social.
- **General Camps:** There are many other camping opportunities available to 4-H members including horse, space, outdoor adventures, and day camps. Ask your community club leader or extension agent if interested in other camping opportunities.

RECORD KEEPING

You will be encouraged to keep records of your 4-H participation and project work. This will help you keep track of what you are learning and will encourage your growth and development as a 4-H member. Completed records are signed by your parents and leader at the end of the 4-H year.

A good record will reflect accomplishments and therefore serve as the basis for awards, trips and other forms of recognition, as well as teaching a desirable habit for keeping track of financial and business matters. Members are encouraged to work on records throughout the year as they complete project work, often at project meetings. Records should include all 4-H activities throughout the year.

There are three different types of record forms:

- **Personal Page:** Contains space for a picture of the member, project list and the 4-H story. A new personal page is issued each year.
- **Permanent Record:** A summary of all projects, exhibits, offices held, events attended and other participation for the entire year. Only one permanent record is necessary for all the years as a 4-H member.
- **Project Report Form:** These forms are used for each project in which a 4-H'er is enrolled. The form provides space for setting goals, knowledge and skills learned, work accomplished, leadership, photos and other project information. New Project Report Forms are completed each year for each project you are enrolled.

Record Book requirements may vary among local units. Please contact your local Extension Agent or club leader to learn more.

4-H members may submit completed Achievement Applications to the local K-State Research and Extension office for champion and other awards and recognition consideration. Award applications need to be submitted along with the record book. Members who complete their record books are invited to attend the 4-H Achievement event each year in the fall where presentations of various awards and achievements are made.

Note: There are units in Kansas that do not have an annual banquet for award recognition. Please contact your local extension office for more information.



Other forms of recognition include:

Achievement Pins: Awarded to 4-H'ers who meet the pin and turn in a completed record book. Nine pins are awarded in a series. Applications are available in the extension office, as well as on the online: www.kansas4-h.org/resources/4-h-library/awards-and-recognition/member-achievement-award.html

Project Award Pins: Members must complete their 4-H record book and a Project Award Nomination Form to be eligible for a project award pin. Winners in various projects are eligible to compete at the area and state levels (some age restrictions apply).

Key Award: Recognizes 4-H members who have an exemplary record of accomplishments. Applicants must be at least 16 years old, completed four or more years and meet the other nine requirements.

The greatest and most lasting rewards a 4-H member can receive are:

- Satisfaction from a job well done.
- Pride in his or her accomplishments.
- Recognition from leaders, parents and other 4-H members.
- Knowledge and skill gained through the project.

WHY SHOULD A 4-H'ER SAY THANK YOU?

Members who receive recognition should view it as both a badge of honor and a symbol of the broad interests of their friends in the 4-H program. Say “thank you” to your 4-H friends, including trophy donors, livestock buyers, project and club leaders, parents, judges, etc. A personal letter is the most satisfying and lasting way to say “thanks.” Remember, it’s not **WHAT** you say, but **HOW** you say it that counts. Your note need not be long, but it should be sincere.

PARENTS, HOW CAN YOU BEST HELP YOUR 4-H'ER?

You may help boys and girls get more from their 4-H experience in several ways:

1. Counsel your 4-H'er in the selection of a suitable project by showing interest, but do not complete the work for them. Make sure the work they start is completed.
2. Encourage your child to attend meetings regularly and attend with him/her so you'll be able to help the child remember upcoming activities.
3. Offer your home occasionally for a club or project meeting.
4. Become a registered volunteer and share your knowledge, special skills and hobbies as a club leader or project leader.
5. Keep informed of local 4-H information.



AS EACH 4-H YEAR BEGINS, REMEMBER...

- 4-H youth are more important than the project exhibit itself.
- Learning how to do a project is more important than the project itself. To “learn by doing” through a useful project is fundamental in any sound educational program, and is characteristic of the 4-H program.
- There is more than one good way of doing most things.
- Our job is to teach 4-H members how to think, not what to think.
- Winning isn’t always measured by the results of the ribbon or judging event, but by the character of the 4-H'er, parent and leader.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

FOR INFORMATION IN SPANISH, PLEASE CONTACT:

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**4-H EMPOWERS KIDS WITH THE SKILLS TO
LEAD FOR A LIFETIME.**

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