



LETTERS TO NEW LEADERS



Letter 3: Planning and Conducting 4-H Meetings

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Dear Leader,

By now you may have questions about planning and conducting 4-H meetings. This letter includes information about the basic, everyday ingredients of a successful 4-H meeting, both for projects and club/groups.

Setting Goals with Your 4-H Group

It's helpful for you, together with the 4-H members in your group, to set a few basic goals for the year (Not too many or you may get discouraged!). Consider the needs of the different ages and stages of youth in the 4-H group. You will want to consider these needs as you plan your activities together. If you are a community club leader, you'll find the *San Diego County Leaders' Handbook* has valuable information on setting club goals. Encourage the 4-H members to set personal goals. You will want to do this for yourself also. You've heard the saying, "How do you know if you've gotten there if you don't know where you're going."

The more responsibility the members can assume, the more they will grow and gain confidence. More often than not, members will be the teachers rather than you. The role of adults in program planning will be different, depending on the age level and experience of the youth in the group. Younger boys and girls just starting out in 4-H need and will accept considerable direction and guidance from leaders and parents. As they gain experience and maturity, 4-H members can begin to take more responsibility in planning their own programs. Older teens are usually anxious and able to do their own planning and should be challenged to do so. The leader's role with this age group becomes mainly one of counseling on program possibilities and where to find resources.

Planning a 4-H Calendar

As soon as goals have been selected by your group, it is really helpful to plan a calendar of activities. Be sure to involve the 4-H members and their parents in developing this plan. There are many excellent 4-H program ideas. You and the members in your group will want to talk to other 4-H leaders to assist in developing your plan. Check the County 4-H Newsletter, *4-H Memos*, for the County Master 4-H calendar, especially the dates of those events, contests, fairs, etc. designed primarily for your project area. This monthly newsletter also includes articles describing the activities and entry information. Be sure you are on the mailing list, and share this information with all the 4-H members in your project or club.





“Election of officers gives the members an opportunity to develop leadership skills and responsibility”.



Youth Officers and Committees

In addition to officers for the 4-H Community Club many projects also have officers to help manage the project group and activities in addition to junior and teen leaders. Election of officers gives the members an opportunity to develop leadership skills and responsibility. Suggested 4-H officers are:

- President or Chair
- Vice President or Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer (If needed to keep a record of expenses and income) All funds including those raised by project groups must be kept in the Community Club bank account. Individual project groups can not have their own bank account.
- Project reporter (for publicity reasons)
- Other possible officers or committees are scrapbook coordinator (Historian), equipment manager, telephone committee, meeting host or hostess coordinator, field trip committee, cleanup committee, etc.

There are officer manuals and special instructions sheets for officers available at the 4-H Office. If your project group decides it is necessary to raise funds, involve your community club leader in discussing setting up a separate line item in the club's bank account for the particular project group's funds.

If you are starting a community club bank account be sure to check with the 4H Staff about guidelines and policies regarding establishing a bank account. In order to set up a community club bank account you must use a 4-H Internal Revenue Service Federal Identification number. This can be obtained from the IRS. You must also submit an annual financial report to the County and State 4H Office.

Teaching the 4-H Pledge, Motto and Symbols

It helps members and adults to better understand 4-H if the leader presents the 4-H pledge, motto and symbols to the group early in the activity. They are all described in the publication, “Welcome to 4-H: A Members Guide,” 4-H 1052. The leader may find it helpful to make a poster to use at each meeting, showing the 4-H pledge and the 4-H motto, so members can read it while memorizing it. After the first meeting, each member can take turns leading the flag salute and the 4-H pledge. Some members may also want to give a short talk on the meaning of the 4-H symbols. 4-H flag sets are available in the, *National 4-H Supply Catalog*. Small and large sets are available. Other 4-H meeting aids as well as curriculum materials for many projects are also available in this catalog.

The First Project Meeting

Many experienced project leaders like to invite parents to the first project meeting. This helps parents understand what will be involved in the project and they can help their children select project activities that will fit their families' lifestyle.

This is also a great opportunity to recruit parents to assist with the projects. Parents can help in many ways such as driving to field trips, helping members with hands-on activities an purchasing supplies.

At the first meeting you should set future project meeting dates, times and locations. These should fit most families' calendars. One way is to meet at a regular date and time each week or month. It is important to get started soon after youth have signed up while they are still excited about the projects.

It is important that you let members and parents know what the expectations are in the project at the beginning. They need to be informed about:

- The cost of the project
- Key concepts the members will be learning
- The amount of time the family should anticipate will take to complete this project.
- County activities and events that members may participate in during the year.

- Expectations and proficiencies that must be completed to enter the project in the fair.
- Leadership opportunities that will be available for the member.

You can ask experienced leaders or the 4H staff for advise on the particulars such as dates and activities, realistic expectations for completing a project and cost information.

Your first meeting should be fun. Plan some type of recreational activity like an ice breaker related to the project subject matter. This activity will help all the members and parents get acquainted. If you have older members in the project group you could ask them ahead of time if they would lead the activity.

Be sure to leave time at the end of the meeting for questions and answers. The time that you invest in this orientation meeting will pay off in families feeling informed and part of the 4-H team. Remind parents that the group will be learning about the 4-H Program and your project together.

You should plan on allowing members “make up” activities for meetings that they miss. Members have many demands on their time including but not limited to school and family expectations.

Possible Agenda for a 4-H Meeting

A project meeting has certain distinct parts. How these are put together and the methods used will depend on what is to be accomplished in terms of helping members develop both life skills and project skills. A 1 ¾ hour project meeting might be divided this way:

- **Call to order and Opening Activity** related to the meeting’s topic. This may be a short project-related activity designed to involve the members almost as soon as they come to the meeting. Have your junior leader or another member give directions. Ideas include posters around the room where each member finishes the sentence listed, putting the name of something to do with the topic for the meeting on each member’s back for them to use, perhaps a scavenger hunt or making something.
- **Progress and program reports/demonstrations**, etc. Program reports and demonstrations again give the members a chance to express themselves and be recognized for their accomplishments. In addition, they provide continuity between meetings as does the review of what happened at the last meeting.
- **Project Activity Period.** Usually at least half of the meeting is devoted to this part. This is the time when members should be acquiring subject matter knowledge; learning new skills; and/or demonstrating their

competence and knowledge to others at the project meeting. This is also the time when manual skills related to the subject matter are usually taught. For a variety of ideas of activities refer to the County Leaders’ Handbook.

- **Short Business Meeting.** This is a good time to deal with the needs of the group. Filling out forms, preparing for upcoming events, coordinating activities that support the project group’s goals.
- **Plans for next meeting.** Before the project meeting is adjourned it is a good idea to discuss what the next meeting will cover so that members can be prepared to participate.

For suggestions for Community Club meeting agendas look in the *San Diego County 4-H Leader Training Manual*. There are also agenda suggestions in the *Officer’s Manual* (4-H 1077). If you do not have a copy, contact the 4-H Office. There are endless variations of an agenda and variety certainly helps make the meeting more interesting and lively. Your county 4-H Office may have some suggestions for learning games or other fun activities. An officers’ planning meeting should be held at least two weeks before each Community Club meeting to plan and review the meeting agenda for the upcoming Community Club meeting.



“The time that you invest in this orientation meeting will pay off in families feeling informed and part of the 4-H team.”

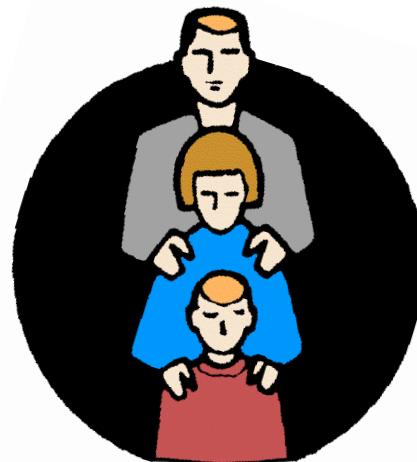


Involving Parents with Your Group

There are a variety of methods for getting parents involved- in fact, successful 4-H membership usually includes a great deal of parental or guardian support. A common reason for becoming a volunteer leader is because a son or daughter wants to join 4-H. It is logical to encourage other parents to be co-leaders, assistant leaders, resource leaders, or special teachers. Don't hesitate to ask for help. Some clubs strongly encourage parents to attend all meetings with their children. Parents may be asked to chaperone club activities, host a meeting, teach a special skill, or share a particular interest. If they are sharing information with the group, it does not necessarily have to be related to the project. It could be regarding citizenship, leadership, community service, or other topics. Not all parents can attend project meetings because of other obligations. Be creative in looking for ways you can involve parents in your project activities.

Tours, Activity Days, etc.

4-H members will really enjoy a variety of field trips, tours, and special activity days. Sometimes you teach them more in a well planned field trip than in a regular meeting. An excellent source for ideas on where to take your club or project members on a tour is to ask other 4-H leaders. They are full of helpful ideas about where to go on a tour, how to organize and prepare for a tour, and how to evaluate a tour. The 4-H members will enjoy doing some of the planning for a field trip, and may even want to invite another 4H club or project group to join them for a trip. A special activity day is another excellent teaching tool. Perhaps you can invite a parent, a resource leader, or a friend with a special skill to teach it at one of your regular meetings. When you take the members on any field trip or tour be sure they turn in to you a completed **Medical Release Form** with their parent or guardians signature. Keep that form with you at all times while on the trip in case of an emergency. When transporting the youth be sure the completed medical treatment form is in the vehicle the member is riding in. As suggested you plan on one adult as a chaperone for every 6 members. If you have further questions or concerns, contact your county 4-H staff or another volunteer leader. We all want to help you succeed.



“Sometimes you teach them more in a well planned field trip than in a regular meeting.”



How can I use the information in this letter:

1. New activities to plan in our 4-H program:

2. Other people who could help us and how they might help:

3. Questions to ask 4-H Extension staff and other leaders:



Reference Materials

UC Cooperative Extension

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Welcome to 4-H: A Member’s Guide—4-H 1052

Officer’s Manual—4-H 1077

Medical Release Forms

County 4-H Newsletter

County 4H Planning Guide

Experienced 4H Project Leaders

4-H Office Staff

San Diego County Leaders’ Training Manual

Ages and Stages of Youth Handout

Have a good meeting!

