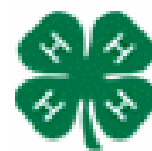




San Diego County's 4-H Tips



Working with Primary Members

Research tells us that children experience half of their learning before they are four years old. They reach another 30% before age eight and only 20% in the remaining childhood years. It is important for 4-H to have educational experiences focusing on the developmental needs of younger children.

The purpose of the 4-H Primary Member Program is to assist youth in becoming competent, caring and contributing citizens.

Who are primary members?

- Youth must be at least 5 by January 1 of the 4-H program year.
- Members who are not older than 8 or in the 3rd grade by January 1 of the program year.

What are primary members like?

- Muscular coordination and control is uneven and incomplete. Large muscles are easier to control than small muscles
- Possess enormous curiosity and delight in discovery
- Have a short attention span, sometimes as little as 5-10 minutes
- Learn best through active concrete methods
- They are sensitive to criticism and don't accept failure well
- They are cooperative and helpful; they want to please
- May have a need to be first, to win or be the best
- Likes being part of and around family

What should be considered in developing primary programs?

Provide one adult for every six children. It is important to have a low child-to-adult ration so that each child receives the individual attention needed. Involving parents or teens in helping the group is beneficial and encouraged.

Divide activities in to short blocks. Vary the pace of the activities so that children are not expected to engage in one type of activity for too long. Mix quiet activities with those that require movement. Primary members often enjoy the process of learning more than the final product.

Promote cooperation rather than competition. It is not appropriate for children aged 5-8 to participate in contests where they are judged against one another. Their self concept is still too vulnerable for competition. Activities should promote practice of skills, provide an opportunity for social interaction and help children learn about fairness. It is appropriate to display their work and recognize their participation.

Use positive guidance and discipline. Primary members are learning self-control. Children benefit from adults who use positive approaches to help them behave and solve conflicts. It is important to teach skills for appropriate behavior, such as taking turns, sharing and working together.

