



4-H Family Handbook



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Family Guide to 4-H



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Welcome to 4-H

We're so glad that your child has joined 4-H. The 4-H program offers a variety of opportunities for young people. Beginning with 4-H Cloverbuds at age 5 through the teen years of middle and high school, your child can participate in projects, events, activities, competitions, workshops, and conferences. There is a lot that 4-H has to offer! This handbook will introduce you to many of those opportunities and can be your go-to guide when you need answers.

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*"We believe
in learning
by doing."*

What is 4-H?

4-H makes learning fun! In 4-H clubs young people work with other youth and adult volunteers to learn new skills, practice leadership, give back to their community, and make new friends. They learn about topics that interest them through hands-on activities. *We believe in learning by doing.*

4-H members select one or more topics to learn about during the year. That includes everything from learning how to cook, build a robot, or care for the environment. These topics are referred to as members' "projects." Hundreds of projects are offered through 4-H so members can pick the ones that most interest them. Or they can find other young people with the same interest and study that topic with the help of a volunteer who shares that same interest.

Welcome to 4-H — New 4-H Member Guide helps new 4-H members sample a variety of 4-H projects. Members learn how to prepare simple snacks, create a windowsill garden,



care for a pet, get to know other club members, and learn about 4-H. If you are interested, ask your 4-H club leader to order a copy of the ***Welcome to 4-H — New 4-H Member Guide*** from www.4-HMall.org.

To learn about the wide variety of projects offered in 4-H, ask your 4-H club leader for a catalog or list of all the available projects.

Who Belongs to 4-H?

4-H is offered in every state. All young people can participate no matter if youth live in the country, the suburbs, or a city. Young people from all races, colors, religions, and a variety of different countries belong to 4-H. Boys and girls participate in 4-H and accommodations are made for young people with disabilities or special needs.

Who Sponsors 4-H?

4-H is the youth development program of Extension and part of the land-grant mission of the state university.

- Clubs are led by volunteers who are screened with background checks and attend training to learn the best ways to work with young people.
- Extension staff oversee the day-to-day 4-H program management.
- Youth development educators, or agents who have expertise in positive youth development, are responsible for volunteer training and support and program oversight.

What Can Young People Do in 4-H?

Our mission in 4-H is to help young people learn skills they can use the rest of their lives — what we refer to as life skills. (See pages 12 and 15 for more information on life skills.) We believe young people learn best through hands-on learning or learning by doing. In 4-H, your child will have many opportunities to be actively involved in learning.

4-H clubs help young people

- Make new friends
- Explore topics of interest
- Develop leadership skills
- Share what they learn with others
- Make connections to mentors, leaders, and potential employers

4-H clubs are designed to be family-friendly! To help find a club near you or one that is learning about a topic of interest, ask your local Extension office about clubs to choose from. 4-H Clubs meet in a variety of locations (such as a school, private home, library, military installation, etc.) and at various times. When joining a 4-H club, young people can choose from the following club types.

Community Clubs — members typically have a wide variety of interests and choose projects to explore based on their own interests. While some project work may be done during club meetings, generally members work on their projects independently. During club meetings, members plan and participate in other learning activities, service projects, and social outings. Club activities provide opportunities for members to develop and grow their leadership and communication skills.



Special Interest (SPIN) Clubs — members share a common interest, such as robotics, animal science, shooting sports, or cooking. During club meetings a volunteer with expertise in the topic assists members as they participate in learning activities, develop new skills, and share what they learn with others. Members experience leadership opportunities as they assist other members in project work or plan service projects related to their shared interest.

Cloverbuds — a group specifically for younger children ages 5–7. During meetings they work on age-appropriate projects as a group, and are encouraged to try new things. Cloverbuds can be an independent group or they may meet in a designated area at the same time as a 4-H club.

How Are Families Involved in 4-H?

You will soon discover that 4-H is a family-friendly program. Family members are invited to participate in 4-H learning activities when possible. We can always use extra help during community service projects, when showing or exhibiting projects, planning for club or county events, or just making 4-H fun for everyone.

Does It Cost to Join 4-H?

Each year when members enroll in 4-H, they may pay a fee to help cover the costs of the program. Some activities or events may have an additional fee to cover supplies and expenses. Some counties have funds to provide scholarships for families that need help paying the fees. Talk with the club leader or 4-H staff to request help with the fees.

What Does 4-H Offer?

4-H members attend club meetings on a pre-set schedule. That could be once a week for a set amount of time, or once or twice a month. You can select a 4-H club around one topic or a club that offers multiple projects.

4-H offers hundreds of projects to choose from and most projects have a project book and resources for learning at home.

4-H members can share their completed project work. That might be entering an exhibit at the local fair or project day, showing an animal they have trained in a competitive event, or presenting a speech. In 4-H, we recognize members for their achievements.

Many clubs give back to the community through community service projects. That might include visiting and giving cards to seniors in nursing homes; volunteering for a meal-packaging event to provide meals for families in need; or collecting stuffed animals to give to children who are sick or injured.

What are Projects?

In 4-H, members learn about topics that interest them. Members choose one or more topics to learn about. That includes everything from learning how to cook, build a robot, or care for the environment. These are referred to as members' "projects." Hundreds of projects are offered so members can pick the ones that most interest them. Ask your club leader for a list of the projects available to choose from.