

Ready, Set, . . . Mow!

Name _____

Age (as of January 1 of the current year) _____

County _____

Club or group name _____

Project helper _____





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Contents

Note to the Project Helper	2
Project Guide	3
PROJECT AREA: Mower Safety	
Activity 1: Getting to Know Your Mower	8
Activity 2: Pieces and Parts	10
Activity 3: Dress for Success	13
Activity 4: Sticking to Safety	17
Activity 5: Riding Safety	19
Talking It Over	21
PROJECT AREA: Making the Cut	
Activity 6: You're in Control	22
Activity 7: Pushing Along	25
Activity 8: Making a Clean Cut	27
Activity 9: Your Yard Is Looking Good	30
Talking It Over	33
PRACTICE PAGES	
Practice 1: Start, Go, Stop, Repeat	34
Practice 2: Turn It Around	35
Practice 3: Turning on a Dime	36
Practice 4: Putting It Together	37
PROJECT AREA: Mower Maintenance	
Activity 10: Time for Tools	38
Activity 11: Sharpening Your Skills	41
Activity 12: Shed Time	44
Activity 13: Troubleshooting Tips	46
Talking It Over	48
Glossary	49
Practice Record	51
Summary of Learning Outcomes	52



For safety reasons,
your involvement
in this project
is especially
important.

NOTE TO THE PROJECT HELPER

Congratulations! A 4-H member or other youth has asked you to serve as a project helper. You may be a parent, relative, project leader, friend, club advisor, or another important person. As a project helper, it is up to you to encourage, guide, and assist. How you choose to be involved helps to shape the learner's life skills and knowledge.

Your Role as Project Helper

Your contribution is critical to delivery of the 4-H program, which is committed to positive youth development (PYD). The 4-H Thriving Model, the theory of change for positive youth development, connects high-quality program settings to the promotion of youth thriving. That's where you come in.

High-quality 4-H program settings provide youth a place to belong, matter, and explore their personal spark. These components, along with strong relationships with caring adults and supportive peers, help ensure that 4-H programs provide a nourishing **developmental context**—a place where youth feel a sense of belonging and can grow.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

- Academic or Vocational Success
- Civic Engagement
- Employability & Economic Stability
- Happiness & Wellbeing

DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES

(Positive Youth Development)

- Positive Academic Attitude
- Social Competence
- Personal Standards
- Connection with Others
- Personal Responsibility
- Contribution

YOUTH THRIVING

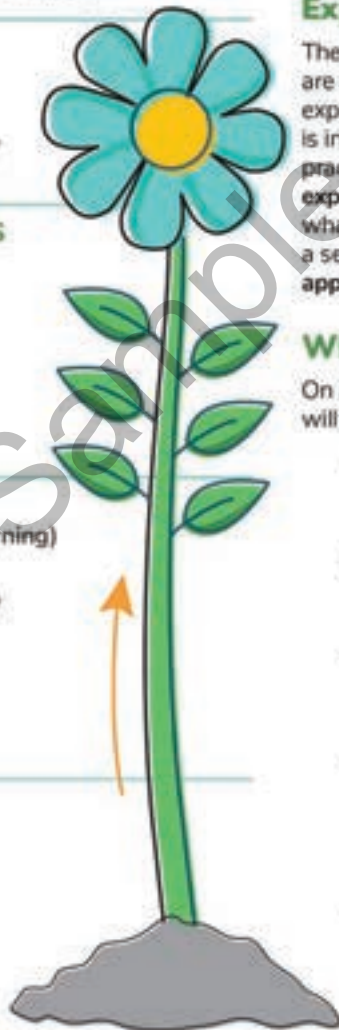
(Social, Emotional & Cognitive Learning)

- Growth Mindset
- Openness to Challenge & Discovery
- Hopeful Purpose
- Prosocial Orientation
- Transcendent Awareness
- Positive Emotions
- Goal Setting & Management

DEVELOPMENTAL CONTEXT

(4-H Programs)

- Sparks
- Belonging
- Relationships
- Engagement



High-quality 4-H programs contribute to PYD through the intentional promotion of social, emotional, and cognitive learning. This process is described by seven indicators of **youth thriving** (see model).

Youth who experience program settings with these intentional social, emotional, and cognitive indicators achieve key positive youth **developmental outcomes**. They are then also more likely to achieve **long-term outcomes** marked by academic or vocational success, civic engagement, employability and economic stability, and happiness and well-being.

For more information on the 4-H Thriving Model of Positive Youth Development, please go to helping-youth-thrive.extension.org.

What You Should Know About Experiential Learning

The activities in this book are arranged in a unique, experiential fashion. A youth is introduced to a particular practice, idea, or piece of information through an opening **experience** (1). The learner **shares** (2) with the project helper what was done and **processes** (3) the experience through a series of questions that allow for **generalizing** (4) and **applying** (5) the new knowledge and skill.



Source: Pfeiffer, J.W., and J.E. Jones, Reference Guide to Handbooks and Annuals. © 1983 John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reprinted with permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

What You Can Do

On a practical level, your role as a project helper means you will strive to do the following:

- Review the Learning Outcomes for each activity to understand the learning taking place. See pages 52-53 for the Summary of Learning Outcomes.
- Become familiar with each activity, including the background information. Stay ahead of the learner by trying out activities beforehand.
- Help the learner establish a plan by reviewing the Project Guide. As a resource person, limit your involvement to providing support.
- As activities are completed, conduct debriefing sessions that allow the learner to share results and answer questions. This important step improves understanding. In the Project Guide, date and initial completed activities.
- Help the learner celebrate what was done well and see what could be done differently. Allow the learner to become better at assessing their own work. Encourage exploration of the topic beyond the scope of this project book.



Project Guide

Welcome to *Ready, Set, . . . Mow!* You are about to learn proper lawn mower operation and safety practices. By completing the activities in this book, you will be better prepared to safely operate a lawn mower.

Ready, Set, . . . Mow! is for youth of all ages who are learning how to mow or who already have some experience. Even experienced mowers will find new knowledge here. This is a complete project for becoming familiar with your mower, selecting protective gear, mastering operating techniques, learning routine maintenance, and enhancing your safety practices. Prior to beginning the project and frequently throughout the project, reference and become familiar with the operator's manual for your specific mower. Always follow manufacturer's age requirement recommendations for safe operation.

The amount of time required to complete each activity varies, but the project is easily completed within one year. Check your county's project guidelines (if any) for completion requirements in addition to the ones below, especially if you plan to prepare an exhibit for the fair.

The project can be repeated if a different type of mower (push, riding, or zero-turn) is the focus each year. If you repeat this project, complete a new project book with different learning experiences, different leadership/citizenship experiences, and a new practice record each year.

This is my _____ (first, second, or third) year taking this project.

Project Guidelines

STEP 1. Complete **twelve** activities (**thirteen** if you are using a push mower), practice pages, and all the Talking It Over questions.

STEP 2. Take part in **at least two** learning experiences.

STEP 3. Become involved in **at least two** leadership/citizenship activities.

STEP 4. Complete a project review.



Youth taking this project need access to a lawn mower and a yard to mow.



Step 1: Project Activities

Complete all thirteen activities, practice pages, and all the Talking It Over questions. The More Challenges activities are optional. As you finish activities, review your work with your project helper. Then ask your project helper to initial and date your accomplishment.

Activity	Date Completed	Project Helper Initials
PROJECT AREA: Mower Safety		
1. Getting to Know Your Mower		
2. Pieces and Parts		
3. Dress for Success		
4. Sticking to Safety		
5. Riding Safety		
Talking It Over		
PROJECT AREA: Making the Cut		
6. You're in Control		
7. Pushing Along (only for those with push mowers)		
8. Making a Clean Cut		
9. Your Yard Is Looking Good		
Talking It Over		
PRACTICE PAGES		
1. Start, Go, Stop, Repeat	Record your practice sessions in the Practice Record.	
2. Turn It Around		
3. Turning on a Dime		
4. Putting It Together		
PROJECT AREA: Mower Maintenance		
10. Time for Tools		
11. Sharpening Your Skills		
12. Shed Time		
13. Troubleshooting Tips		
Talking It Over		



Step 2: Learning Experiences

Learning experiences are meant to complement project activities, providing the opportunity for you to do more in subject areas that interest you. Think of a few learning experiences you could do to show the interesting things you are learning about in this project? Here are some ideas:

- Attend a clinic, workshop, demonstration, or speech related to mower safety and operation.
- Help organize a club or group meeting based on this project.
- Prepare your own demonstration, illustrated talk, or project exhibit.
- Go on a related field trip or tour.
- Explore the education and training necessary for careers in this topic area.
- Participate in a county fair or other judging event.
- Plan your own learning experience.

Once you have a few ideas, record them here. Complete **at least two** learning experiences. Then, describe what you did in more detail. Ask your project helper to date and initial in the appropriate spaces below.

Select learning experiences that are appropriate for your age and skill level.

Plan to Do	What I Did	Date Completed	Project Helper Initials
<i>Demonstration</i>	<i>Showed club or group members the proper attire needed for safe mower operation</i>	<i>4/5/YR</i>	<i>F.L.</i>



Step 3: Leadership and Citizenship Activities

Use what you learn to give back to your community! Choose at least two leadership/citizenship activities from the list below (or create your own) and write them in the table. Record your progress by asking your project helper to initial next to the date as each one is completed. You may add to or change these activities at any time. Here are some examples of leadership/citizenship activities:

- Teach someone about mower safety and operation.
- Help someone else prepare for project judging.
- Host a workshop to share tips about mower safety and operation.
- Encourage someone to enroll in *Ready, Set, . . . Mow!*
- Arrange for a mower safety and operation speaker to visit your club or other group.
- Plan your own leadership/citizenship activity.

Leadership/Citizenship Activity	Date Completed	Project Helper Initials
<i>Organized a field trip to a mower dealer.</i>	<i>5/12/YR</i>	<i>F.L.</i>



Step 4: Project Review

All finished? Congratulations! After you have completed the activities in this book, you are ready for a project review. This process will help assess your personal growth and evaluate what you have learned.

Use this space to write a summary of your project experience. Be sure to include a statement about the skills you have learned and how they might be valuable to you in the future.

Sample Pages

Now, set up a project evaluation. You can do this with your project helper or another knowledgeable adult. If you are a 4-H member, it can be part of a club evaluation or part of your country's project judging.



ACTIVITY 1

Getting to Know Your Mower

Words in **bold** throughout this book are defined in the glossary.

MOWERS COME IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES but can be broken down into three main types: push, riding, and zero-turn. Each of these has advantages and disadvantages: **push mowers** are great for small areas, **riding mowers** are great for large open areas, and **zero-turn mowers** are great for large areas with a lot of **obstacles**. Let's explore and learn what makes your mower unique!

WHAT TO DO

Estimated time: 30 minutes

STEP 1. Get the **operator's manual** for your mower and head over to your mower.

STEP 2. While looking at your mower and referencing the operator's manual, find the following information:

What	Information
Type of mower (circle one):	PUSH RIDING ZERO-TURN
Manufacturer (brand)	
Model	
Serial number	
Mowing width	
Engine size	
Fuel type	
Oil capacity	
Oil type	

Learning Outcomes

Project skill: Becoming familiar with mower and mower operator's manual • **Life skill:** Processing information • **Educational standard:** AFNR-CCCS CS.03.04.03.a. Read and interpret operating instructions related to operation, storage and maintenance of tools and equipment related AFNR tasks. • **Success indicator:** Identifies information about mower using mower and operator's manual



More Challenges

To learn more about other types of mowers, visit your local lawnmower dealership and ask questions to a representative. Share your experience with your 4-H club or project helper.

BACKGROUND

Design engineers continue to improve mowers and provide a lot of different options on all types of mowers.

- Push mowers are generally the same size but can have different features, including electric or **pull start**, **self-propelled** movement, and **mulching bags**.
- Riding mowers have **mower decks** of various sizes, different types of attachments, hitches to pull trailers, and various engine locations.
- Zero-turn mowers come in multiple sizes but are more standardized as far as controls and shape of the machine.

Mowers also can have different types of power. Many are powered by gasoline, and some are powered by diesel fuel. Electric-powered mowers are becoming more common. Electric mowers run off a rechargeable **battery**, like a power tool.



Did you know?

There are also **autonomous** mowers that, just like a robotic vacuum cleaner, do not require an operator.



Resources

Lawn mowers come with all kinds of features. Take a look at these collections to see some of the latest:

- toro.com/en/homeowner/walk-behind-mowers
- cubcadet.com/en_US/lawn-mowers

Manual Moment

The operator's manual for your mower is the answer book for any questions you might have during this project and beyond. Operator's manuals include everything about the mower, along with safety, **maintenance**, and operation information. The manual serves as the legal resource from the manufacturer to make sure the mower is operated the way it was designed.

