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*A Handbook
for
4-H Club
Officers*



Cooperative Extension Service
College of Agriculture and Home Economics

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The Club Officer

A 4-H club's success depends on members working together to accomplish the club's goals. Teamwork and cooperation among members requires organization and leadership. Leadership comes from the club's officers. Each officer has an important job in making the 4-H club successful, and helping each member of the club be successful.

This booklet outlines duties and responsibilities of each officer, and describes how to carry out these duties and meet these responsibilities. A club can have more officers than are listed here or, if the club is small, it can have fewer officers.

Officers and Club Success

It's an honor to be a 4-H club officer, but like all honors, it carries responsibilities. The success of a 4-H club depends on the officers' ability to work with all other club members to plan, conduct and evaluate club activities. Officers must work together and use parliamentary procedure to guide members through a smoothly run meeting.

Being A Good Officer

Good officers are friendly, honest, sincere and loyal. Officers help members decide what the club will do, give everyone a chance to be involved in these decisions, and get all the members involved in activities.

Good officers get things done right and get them done on time. They are proud of their jobs and their club, and always try to do their best. Officers also work with their 4-H club leaders to plan and carry out club programs and activities.

Club officers are highly visible representatives, not only of their club, but of the entire 4-H organization. An officer's skills and abilities, standards and ideals, speech and grooming, even their smiles, represent the best in 4-H.

4-H Needs Officers Who Will:

- Work with all club officers and give every member a chance to participate.
- Be dependable.
- Help plan programs that involve the entire club membership.
- Share leadership with others and give them a chance to grow as leaders.
- Be on time.
- Carry out duties and responsibilities courteously.
- Make meetings worthwhile and interesting.
- Work with other club officers, club leaders and executive committee members.

Duties of All Officers

To be successful, each 4-H club officer must work as a team member with all other officers, club committee members, the club's members and adult 4-H volunteer leaders, and share many duties with all these people. Some important duties include:

- Recruiting new members and organizing the club.
- Planning the program, month by month, for the year.
- Arranging for a meeting place and caring for it properly.
- Conducting and taking part in meetings.
- Keeping club records and sharing them with club leaders and the extension 4-H agent as required.

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- Maintaining high spirits and interest in the club.
 - Helping each 4-H club member get an opportunity to participate in activities and be a contributing member of the group.
 - Maintaining regular contact with the county extension office.
 - Attending the 4-H officers' training session when it is held in the county.

Conducting Club Meetings

Each 4-H club meeting has three parts: the business meeting, the program and recreation. Each part should be treated equally. The business meeting usually follows an order of business to make sure all important items are covered. The club secretary's record book (200.A-6) includes an agenda to help the club's executive committee plan the order of business. A sample agenda:

1. Call to order
2. Opening ceremonies
3. Roll call
4. Minutes of previous meeting
5. Correspondence, received or sent
6. Reports of officers, council members or leaders
7. Reports of standing or special committees
8. Old business
9. New business
10. Announcements
11. Adjournment of business part of meeting
12. Program
13. Recreation

Program

The educational program should last 30 minutes or less.

It can be a talk or demonstration by a club member, a slide presentation, a movie or video tape, or a presentation by a special guest. Program content is a decision of the program committee, but should be something that interests club members. Programs should cover a variety of topics and include different kinds of presentations to keep members active and interested in attending club meetings.

When there is a guest speaker, the program chairman or the committee member that first contacted the speaker should already have discussed general meeting plans and the time allowed for the speaker's presentation. The program chairman or committee member should also –

1. Know the speaker's full name, how to pronounce it, the title the speaker prefers, the title of his or her presentation, and find out if questions can be asked after the talk.
2. Meet the speaker at the door and make him or her feel welcome.
3. Introduce the speaker to members and leaders before the actual program, if time permits.
4. Encourage club members to start a discussion or ask questions after the program.

Recreation

Recreation is the social part of the meeting, and is as important as any other part of the meeting. The recreation leader should have some sort of planned activity or game. When planning a game, take into consideration the room's size, the members' interests and the time available. Involve officers, members and leaders in all activities.

Keys to a Successful Club Meeting

Good 4-H club meetings don't just happen. They are the result of planning and effort by officers, leaders and members, all working together. Officers have important jobs; committees have key duties; each member has a part. Some things to remember –

1. Start and close the meeting on time.
2. Stick to the order of business.
3. Plan programs at least a month in advance.
4. Avoid too much talk.

Why are some meetings better than others? Use the checklist below to evaluate a few club meetings. If “No” is checked more than once for a single meeting, or if the the same “No” is checked for more than one meeting, it's time to take another look at the meeting planning process.

	Yes	No
Meeting was well planned.	_____	_____
Each officer did his or her job well.	_____	_____
Meeting started and ended on time.	_____	_____
Business was completed. Issues were discussed and decisions made without taking too much time.	_____	_____
Meeting place was comfortable.	_____	_____
Members participated in discussion.	_____	_____
Program was interesting.	_____	_____
Recreation was included and was well planned.	_____	_____

Officer's Duties and Responsibilities

Duties of the President

When 4-H club members elect someone president, the members also expect that person to accept the responsibilities of leadership. The cooperation of the club members depends, to a large part, on the president's leadership skills. The president is responsible for maintaining order at meetings, and involving all members in meetings and other club activities. There are some specific things that are part of the president's job –

- Plan the business part of each meeting with his or her executive committee (other officers and leaders) well before the meeting.
- Prepare a meeting agenda before the meeting.
- Preside and call the meeting to order, and conduct the meeting according to agenda items. Arrange for the vice president to preside if the president cannot attend the meeting.
- Start and end the meeting on time.
- Know parliamentary procedure to conduct an orderly meeting.
- Appoint a temporary secretary if the elected secretary is absent.
- Keep order; be courteous, but firm. Decide points of order fairly.
- Make it possible for all members to be heard, and encourage everyone to participate. Delegate general responsibilities so each club member has a job to do sometime during the year.
- Cast the tie-breaking vote when required. The president can vote only when voting by ballot, or to break a tie.

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- The meeting belongs to the members. The president is only the pilot, and should avoid personal opinions about motions under discussion.
 - Appoint committees as directed by club membership. Define each committee's functions and responsibilities. Check frequently on committee activities, and receive reports from committee chairpersons.
 - Guide and assist other club officers when developing program plans, and in general execution of club projects and activities.
 - Consult regularly with volunteer 4-H leaders and the county extension 4-H agents.
 - Attend the 4-H officers' training session when it is held in the county.

Duties of the Vice President

The vice president takes the president's place if the president resigns or is not present at a meeting. This requires the vice president to be familiar with the president's position and responsibilities.

The vice president serves as the club's parliamentarian if this is not an elected position. The vice president must understand parliamentary procedure to perform this function, or to assist an elected parliamentarian.

The vice president works closely with the president, other club officers and 4-H leaders in planning and organizing club activities.

The vice president is chairperson of the program committee. As chairperson of this committee, he or she prepares a calendar of events listing all future programs and other scheduled club activities, follows through with

each monthly program, and notifies club members who are on the program.

Attend the 4-H officers' training sessions when it is held in the county.

Duties of the Secretary

The secretary is responsible for keeping all club records not specifically delegated to another club officer. This includes minutes of each meeting, committee reports, attendance records and all correspondence. The secretary helps the president develop a meeting agenda by identifying items to be taken up at a business meeting, and helps start and end a meeting on time.

The secretary usually sits with the president during business meetings so club records are readily accessible, if needed. The secretary keeps accurate records of proceedings of all meetings. Minutes of a meeting should include, but are not limited to, name of the club, time and place of the meeting, name of the presiding officer, attendance, a note indicating approval of previous minutes, and the treasurer's balance. Other records that may be included are officers elected, committees appointed and committee chairpersons named, committee reports, the exact wording of any motion made with names of persons making and seconding the motion, votes for and against a motion, and a summary of all other business conducted by the club in a regular business session. The person who prepares minutes should sign the minutes, along with their title.

The secretary usually reads minutes of previous meetings aloud when asked by the president. Changes can be

made to minutes with majority approval of attending members and officers.

If both president and vice president are absent at a meeting, the secretary will call the meeting to order and preside until members elect a temporary chairperson for that meeting. If the secretary will be absent from a meeting, the president should be notified in advance. The president will appoint an acting secretary for that meeting.

The secretary also keeps records of club officer elections, establishment of standing and special committees, members appointed to standing or special committees, and chairpersons selected for any committee.

The secretary reads correspondence addressed to the club, will write replies when necessary, and will write original correspondence at the request of officers or members. Files of all original correspondence, and copies if needed, will be maintained by the secretary. The secretary also collects and files records and reports of all committees, and of all written resolutions.

The secretary prepares regular reports to volunteer 4-H leaders and to the county extension office.

The secretary helps the club reporter by providing detailed information about club activities that can be included in a news story.

Attend the 4-H officers' training session when it is held in the county.

Duties of the Treasurer

The treasurer is responsible for keeping the club's financial records. Members and officers need to know the club's financial status to make the best use of money it has earned.

The treasurer takes charge of all money taken in by the club and gives receipts as needed. Accurate records are essential for all money received and its source, and for all money paid out, with records of where and why the money was spent.

Deposit all money in a checking account, preferably in a local bank, as soon as it is received. Do not keep club money at home or on your person. Never mix money that belongs to the club with personal money, and never use club money to pay personal bills, no matter how short the time intended for the loan.

The treasurer's records must be complete enough that a report of money received, bills paid, and the amount on hand can be given at each club meeting. The president usually calls for the treasurer's report during the business meeting. Be ready to give, anytime, an itemized accounting of funds on request of club officers, adult volunteer leaders or county extension agents.

Pay money out of the club's treasury only by check, but only as approved by the club or as specified by club bylaws. Pay bills authorized by the club promptly. Canceled checks will serve as receipts.

The treasurer is responsible for club funds until a new treasurer is elected. An auditing committee should check the present treasurer's records before turning money and records over to a new treasurer. If the club disbands, turn any remaining money over to a responsible person or organization approved by the club, or dispose of the money according to the club bylaws.

The treasurer is chairperson of the club's finance committee. This committee plans fund raising events for the club.

The treasurer attends officers' training sessions when offered in the county.

Duties of the Reporter

The club reporter tells the public about the club's activities and projects. Newspaper editors like news stories about 4-H work because readers like to hear about good things young people are doing. A 4-H club depends on the support, respect and goodwill of people in the community, and it's the reporter's job to tell them who did what, where and when they did it, how it was done and why it was done.

To be news, a 4-H event has to be one of the following: 1) recent, 2) important to somebody outside the 4-H club, 3) close to where the newspaper is published, 4) unusual or 5) interesting to people outside the club. Most important, every news story must be accurate. If the news story includes two or three of these elements, the chance of getting the story published are even better.

News stories can be written before an event (editors call this story a precede) or afterwards. If the story is about a 4-H club meeting, write the story immediately after the meeting, then mail it or take it to the local newspaper as soon as possible. Old stories lose their news value quickly and may not get printed. Save news story clippings about the club for the club's permanent records. A scrap book is better than a file drawer or cardboard box.

The 4-H club reporter is also chairperson of the club's publicity committee.

Attend the 4-H officers' training session when it is held in the county.

Some suggestions for a good, straight news story:

- Always type your name, address and telephone number at the top of the first page. This helps the newspaper editor or reporter find somebody to answer questions.
- Always type the story. Double space the lines and use wide left and right margins. Keep sentences short and keep paragraphs short. A news story paragraph should have two to four sentences.
- Put the most important or most interesting fact in the first paragraph. Add more information, in order of importance, in following paragraphs. Write stories in third person (he, she, they). Leave out personal opinions; stick to the facts. Check spelling carefully, especially names.
- Pictures always add to a story, but they must be good pictures. Newspapers can print from color pictures if that's all that is available, but they prefer black and white prints.
- Newspapers are not the only way to reach the public. Local radio stations want and need local news as much as the newspaper. Radio is especially good for announcing (a precede story) a special club event that is coming up. Make sure precede stories get to the newspaper or radio station well ahead of the actual event.
- Visit the local newspaper office or radio station, and the TV station if there is one, regularly to visit with editors and reporters. A few minutes worth of conversation can easily turn up two or three story ideas the newspaper or radio station wants to use. On the other hand, if they don't use a particular story, don't be discouraged.

Keep trying and never be afraid to ask editors and reporters for help or suggestions.

Duties of the Song Leader

Anyone who can talk can probably sing. Group singing helps 4-H members feel more at ease; it helps them gain poise and increases confidence. The song leader can generate enthusiasm or quiet a noisy group, depending on the selection of songs.

Choose the songs before the meeting date. Even if they are familiar songs, practice them before the meeting. If song books are used, distribute them at the meeting and collect them after the singing. Be sure to get the group's attention before starting a song, and encourage everyone to sing.

Attend the 4-H officers' training session when it is held in the county.

Some suggestions for a successful songfest:

- Start group singing with a familiar, upbeat song. It sets a high energy level at first. Be enthusiastic and it will spread, but don't be a solo entertainer. Get everyone to participate. Allow the group's enthusiasm to wind down to a more relaxed atmosphere as the session ends.
- Attitude infects others. Be natural and relaxed, smile and be pleasant. Praise whenever possible, prompt only when necessary and never complain. Develop a good library of songs, and be prepared with a list of good songs before the songfest begins. Stop while the group is still interested.
- Never introduce more than one new song at a session.

Make sure the group is comfortable with the new song before asking them to learn another one.

- Short, happy songs seem to work best to begin a meeting or song session. Move along to a patriotic song with familiar words and music, then try one of the 4-H songs that let people express their pride in being 4-H members or leaders. Those familiar 4-H camp songs, the ones everybody learned in a group around the campfire at day's end, are a good way to bring the session to a close.
- The best thing a song leader can do is keep a careful file of songs, classifying them by type and length. Experience and constant rearranging of this file will provide a ready source of good material to fit any mood or occasion.

Duties for the Recreation Leader

The recreation leader plans interesting activities for 4-H members. Recreation gives members a chance to get to know one another through games, parties and picnics. A successful 4-H meeting can be measured by how much members enjoyed themselves.

Well planned activities for the group should take into consideration age, space and available time. Select games that all can play and have at least one new game at each meeting. A good way to organize recreation materials is to put it in a looseleaf binder.

If the event is a special one, alternate active and quiet games, building to a climax just before refreshments. Close the program with a game that will be a hit.

Attend the 4-H officers' training session when it is held in the county.

Some suggestions for a successful recreation program:

- Enthusiasm is contagious. Begin with the idea that each person expects to have a good time. Seventy-five percent of the success of a recreation leader depends on enthusiasm. Be full of surprises.
- Plan the program. A good recreation leader knows the games before he or she tries to teach them to others. Begin with something familiar and simple and save the best until last. Explain how each game is played and, if necessary, demonstrate. Games are for fun, not for perfection. If mistakes are made correct them with humor.
- Collect and prepare everything needed for each game ahead of time. Pick helpers to organize the group, lead some games, and distribute any handouts. End the games while the group is still having fun.

Serving as a 4-H club officer is a genuine opportunity to develop leadership skills. The experience of serving as an officer of a 4-H club ensures future success as a useful, productive member of any organization.

Notes

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