

Preparing for the Fair

Introduction:

The 4-H Fair and judging can be a challenging time for our 4-H members. You should not feel bad if you are a little afraid. Most people are nervous when going in to a new situation. There is a message to 4-H Members and a Message to Leaders that is for background information. We don't intend for you to read those sections to the members. It is provided to help you with the discussion.

What's it like?

Ask youth to share what it's like to have projects judged. Start with the non-livestock.

Ask youth to share what it's like to show their animals.

Ask them if there was something they were nervous about? Encourage youth to be honest. Encourage others to be supportive. This is not a time for making fun of others, which sometimes kids can do.

What's it like to be the judge?

Bring in 5 items that are all similar (i.e. 5 oranges, 5 rocks from the driveway, 5 pencils, 5 different kinds of cookies). Have a couple of members place them in order from 1 to 5. Have them share their placings and explain why they put them in that order. Reasons may be they liked the shape or color of one more than the others. There are NO right or wrong answers here. Then ask the others if they agreed with the judge. Discuss it is the opinion of the judge that makes the final decision. The other judge may have placed them differently. Share that in some projects, a judge's opinion can enter in.

Practice Judging a Project

It is best to use an old 4-H project for this activity. Ask for a scoresheets from the Extension Office that fits the project. (You will need a copy for each member.)

Ask each child to judge the project based on the project rules and the scoresheet. Members should not share their answers until discussion time.

Ask how many gave the project a blue honor? Ask them to share why?

How many gave the project a blue? Ask to share why?

Continue until all have shared.

Discuss why the differences between the judges.

Where there some rules that some of the judges missed?

After hearing all the discussion, did some of the youth want to change their mind about their placing?

Judging Role-play

You the leader or an other 4-H member you can trust be the 4-H project judge. Have a younger or new member play the 4-H member having a project judged. You can use a pencil or a piece of paper as their "project". Something that they did not make. Role-play the member coming in to the judge and talking to the judge.

After, ask the youth what it was like. Encourage them that it is okay to be nervous. Stress not all of our work is perfect. Take the judge's suggestions and work to "Make the Best Better".

Encourage them to take suggestions. Yes, it is one person's opinion, but youth need to learn to accept suggestions and not "blame" the judge.



Recourses: 4-H 567-w Judging 4-H Projects. Purdue University, Purdue Cooperative Extension.

What do you do if you don't win?

Discuss with youth or ask them to role-play how two 4-H members should behave when one wins champion and the other doesn't.

Encourage good sportsmanship and gracious losing.

Encourage taking the suggestions and making the project better next year.

Message to the 4-H Member

As a 4-H member you are a special and unique individual. Each 4-H member is responsible for his/ her own actions and attitudes. Each 4-H member can learn from the judging experience. It is intended to give guidance for personal growth and to provide opportunities for improving one's skills and abilities. It is up to the 4-H member to learn from the judging experience; a parent, leader, or judge cannot learn for the 4-H member. A judging experience should help a 4-H member learn to evaluate his/her own work.

An exhibit does not measure or illustrate all that a 4-H member achieved, but it is an example of what has been accomplished.

Keep in mind the following points.

1. Accept constructive feedback; learn from it. Model to others the value of gathering information which can be used to improve skills and abilities.
2. A judge's comments are meant to be helpful even though the judge was given the responsibility to critique the exhibits.
3. Abilities are often developed with age and the experiences that have contributed to a member's growth.
4. Realize that people occasionally make mistakes and are entitled to your positive respect.
5. Demonstrate good sportsmanship. Show positive appreciation and regard for the achievements of those whose projects placed higher than yours. Be proud of your accomplishments and your achievements.
6. Judging is hard work, maybe even harder than completing the project. It is only because the judges believe in youth, 4-H members, and the 4-H opportunity that they agree to judge hundreds of projects and provide comments that are meant to help you, the 4-H member, have a positive chance to grow through the 4-H program. Understand that they are making an investment in you. Appreciate their effort.

Message to the 4-H Leader

4-H is intended to be a positive learning experience. It is through 4-H that young people and adults can grow and develop into productive and contributing members of our communities. It is through relationships and dialog with adults and older youth that 4-H members have the best opportunity to understand the value of 4-H and the role of 4-H projects and related judging activities. Adults help young people interpret the judging experience in relevant and meaningful ways. Evaluation of work should be a positive experience, designed to help the 4-H member improve and grow.

Interpretation and dialog help 4-H members realize that the 4-H exhibit is not an end in itself and that it does not represent all that the 4-H member learned. The 4-H project exhibit is one part of 4-H and part of the total learning experience. The exhibit is only one measure of success and achievement. Adults can help the young person experience self-recognition, self-satisfaction, and a feeling of success by learning and competing in the project.

The following suggestions help in discussing 4-H projects and the process of judging with young people.

1. Help young people understand the purpose of judging: a) by evaluating a sample of the 4-H member's work, b) by helping the member see progress he/she has made, c) by helping the member improve his/her skills.
2. Help a 4-H member set realistic goals based on age, available resources, and time.
3. Share your thinking and hopes, but be careful not to impose adult goals on 4-H members. A person's goals should be his/her own.
4. Help the 4-H member recognize good work. Point out work that you believe is good; explain why you think so.
5. Provide constructive criticism/feedback based on experience, standards, and guidelines — appropriate to the subject of the project and the age of the member.
6. Be familiar with the guidelines or criteria of the 4-H project at both the county and the state level.
7. Be a coach and mentor. Help the younger person recognize his/her accomplishments. Encourage 4-H members to do the work themselves to the best of their ability.
8. Recognize that there is more than one way to complete a 4-H project. Creativity is a valuable personal ability; encourage creativity in completing 4-H projects within the project boundaries.
9. Help the 4-H member realize that the judge's comments are designed to help improve the exhibit and should not be taken personally. These comments should be based on standards even though people view things differently.
10. In competitive events, avoid over-emphasis on the winner. Help the 4-H member accept the results of the competition and realize that everyone is a winner through his/her own accomplishments and efforts.