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# The First Three Club Meetings

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*The first three meetings set the tone for a 4-H club. These meetings establish 4-H tradition, management styles, and provide clear roles for the youth involved, the parents, volunteer leaders, and county extension staff. By starting a club off with tools to conduct fun meetings, your 4-H youth will stay engaged while learning in a fun, hands-on manner.*



The 4-H meeting is one of the major tools 4-H leaders use to help youth develop and learn. The 4-H meeting offers the opportunity to participate in democracy in action, develop friendships, exchange ideas, explore new ideas and areas of interest, and develop life skills. The 4-H meeting is often the first contact 4-H members have with the 4-H program. For many youth, the experiences in the local clubs are the major involvement they have with 4-H. Thus, the experiences in the local club “make or break” the 4-H experience for most youth. A 4-H club meeting is a place where members can have fun and learn. No 4-H meeting should be so concerned with education that it lacks the sounds of laughter and friendly conversation.

## Planning

The 4H club leadership team should meet several weeks prior to the first 4H club meeting and plan the first three club meetings in detail. Leadership team members and resource people they invite to assist will be responsible for conducting the club meetings until the club officers are elected and installed during the third club meeting. At the fourth meeting the club president and other officers will take over and run the meetings under adult leader supervision.

The first few club meetings should focus on acquainting 4H members and their parents with 4H and getting the club off to a good start. Parent involvement is necessary for a successful club, so parent participation should be encouraged from the beginning.

## Who Will Do What?

During the leadership team planning meeting, a list of responsibilities for the first three club meetings should be developed and the list divided among leadership team members. You will need people to do the following:

1. Contact prospective members and parents concerning the club meeting. Encourage parent participation.
2. May need promote club through social media, newspapers, and schools.
3. Secure and arrange the facilities for the meeting.
4. Secure the needed printed materials and resources for each meeting.
5. Plan and conduct different parts of each club meeting. The club officers will not take over until the fourth meeting, so leadership team members will be responsible for conducting the first three meetings.

Suggested outlines for your first three club meetings are given below. These outlines can be modified to fit your club situation. The important thing to remember in planning the meetings is to make sure they are well organized, that people on the program understand their responsibility and prepare themselves to carry it out and that the meeting is enjoyed by all in attendance.

## The First Meeting

All information publicizing this meeting should indicate that parents can attend with their children.

**Display** – Before the meeting begins, a display of 4-H project books and other 4-H items and information should be set up.

**Welcome and Get Acquainted** – The member of the leadership team who will be presiding during the meeting welcomes everyone and introduces the get acquainted activity.

**Suggested Get Acquainted Activity** – Give each person an index card or small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their first and last name in large letters in the center of the card. In the corners of the card, instruct them to write the following:

1. Upper Left – Where they work or go to school
2. Upper Right – Hobbies or what they like to do for fun or relaxation
3. Lower Left – One thing they expect to do in 4-H
4. Lower Right – Facts about their family

Once they have completed the card, instruct them to find a person they don't know and discuss the information on the card with them. After a few minutes, have each pair join another pair (group of four people). Each person then introduces their partner to the other couple.

**Order of Business Skit** – This skit can be presented by 4-H members from an existing club. If this can't be arranged, the members of the leadership team can present the skit. The 4-H information sheet entitled *4-H Club Meeting Agenda* should be used in planning this activity.

Provide a copy of *Club Meeting Agenda* to each family present. Each handout should be discussed. Parents should be asked to help their children learn the opening ritual by the next meeting.

**4H Projects** – 4-H members take projects which teach life skills and useful information. There are 50 major project areas from which a 4H member can choose. Most project books are available at a moderate fee. However, certain project books may be available free of charge. The county Extension office will have information on cost and how to order.

Refer to the 4-H project book display and encourage them to look at it before leaving. Have two 4-H members of existing clubs discuss their 4-H projects. They should tell what they have done in their project, what they have learned and how the project work has helped them develop as individuals.

Explain that the club will have several project groups. The formation of project groups will be based on the interests of club members and project leader availability. A 4-H'er can take projects to work on individually that don't have a project group. It is recommended that new 4-H clubs limit their members to two projects. One of these should be a project that has a project group.

Conduct the *Pick A Project* activity. Each child should complete this activity with a parent's assistance. This will help determine what areas club members are interested in and will provide information to make decisions on what project groups are needed.

Explain that a 4-H project is something that the whole family can work on together. Conduct a discussion concerning what project groups are needed. Let members and parents express their ideas.

**Parent Responsibilities** – Hand out and discuss the information sheet entitled *Information for 4-H Parents*.

**Closing** – Ask for questions. Thank everyone for attending. Announce date, time, and place for next meeting. Remind parents to attend.

**Refreshments** – Serve refreshments and encourage people to look at project display.

## The Second Meeting

Members of the leadership team will conduct this meeting. Follow the information sheet *4-H Club Meeting Agenda* to carry out the meeting. During the business session do the following:

1. Name the club.
2. Decide on regular meeting date, time, and place.
3. Discuss 4-H club officer responsibilities and explain that officers will be elected at the next meeting.

**Method Demonstration and Illustrated Talk** – During the program section of the meeting have a 4-H member of an existing club give a method demonstration and one give an illustrated talk. Explain that club members will be learning to do these type presentations and giving them at club meetings.

**Project Group Formation** – Introduce the project group leaders and let them explain what their project group will be doing.

Discuss the Arkansas 4-H registration system with each family. Explain that it is recommended that new 4-H members select no more than two projects. One of these should be a project which has a project group.

Explain that 4-H'ers can take projects other than those offered in project groups. The project groups are to help them learn to do project work and provide for a group experience in "Learning by Doing." 4-H'ers can take projects they work on independently with guidance from a parent, other adult, or teen.

**Recreational Activity** – Get 4-H'ers and parents involved together in a recreational activity. Consult Volunteer guidebook for recreation ideas.

**Refreshments** – Serve refreshments.

## The Third Meeting

Members of the leadership team will conduct this meeting. Follow the information sheet *4-H Club Meeting Agenda* to conduct this meeting. During the business session the 4-H club officers will be elected and installed; refer to *Election of Officers*. Upcoming 4-H meetings and activities should also be discussed. A 4-H officer training workshop should be held with the newly elected club officers prior to the next meeting. A date, time and place should be set for this activity. Refer to the information sheet entitled *4H Club Officers* regarding officer training.

Have the county Extension agent discuss county activities available to 4-H members, parents, and leaders.

**Club Workshop** – Conduct a workshop to make a club banner. Have all the materials needed with instructions on how to assemble. This should be a banner with the club's name and the 4-H emblem. It can be displayed during club meetings.

Depending on the size of the club and age of the members, the above activity might need to be modified or another activity substituted. The object is to get all members involved in doing something as a group. You might consider a simple craft, science experiment or cooking activity.

This could also be used as the first meeting of the club project groups. Each project leader could have a 30-minute activity planned in which the members of that project group could participate.

**Refreshments** – Serve refreshments. This is a good opportunity for 4-H'ers in the foods and nutrition project to get involved in their project by preparing and serving club refreshments.