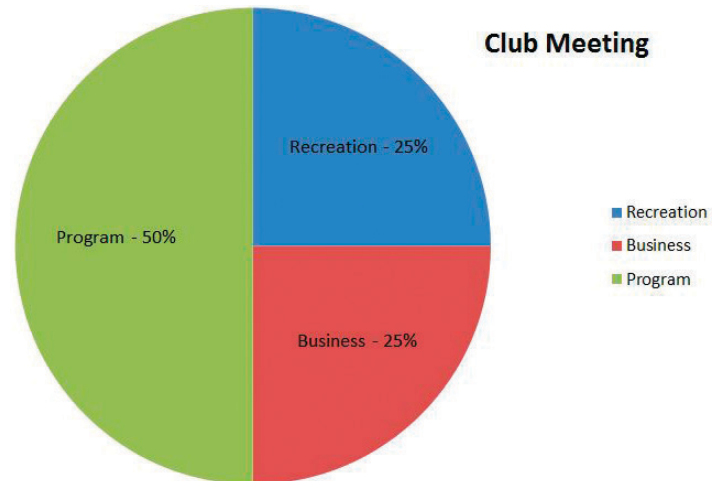




# 4-H VOLUNTEER TRAINING SERIES

## 4-H Club Meetings



4-H is a youth driven organization where we utilize youth in conducting the club meetings and making decisions in setting the yearly club goals and in planning the club agenda and programs for the coming year. As a leader, it is your responsibility to make sure your club officers and members are all a part of the planning process. Work with your parents, other club volunteers, and most importantly your 4-H Agent to have a successful year.

### What Happens at a 4-H Club Meeting?

The 4-H club meeting consists of three parts – business, educational program, and recreation. The suggested length of time for the business meeting is 1/4 of your scheduled meeting time. The educational portion is often the largest part of the meeting (1/2 of your meeting time), followed by a shorter social time of recreation (1/4 of your meeting time). Club meetings usually follow this format, but keep in mind, you can be as creative as you and your club officers want. At times you may want to change the agenda so the same thing does not happen at every club meeting.

### Business Meeting

The business meeting usually includes roll call, reading of the minutes by the secretary, treasurer’s report, committee reports, old and new business and leader announcements. The clubs officers should run this part of the meeting, with leader guidance. A business session doesn’t have to be part of every meeting, but probably should be held at least once a month and other times as needed. Refer to **Running a Smooth 4-H Business Meeting\*** for more information.

### Educational Program

The educational program is an important part of the 4-H experience for your club members. This part of the meeting provides an opportunity for the members to join in a group learning experience. The learning experience you provide can take many forms. The topic of the program may or may not be related to a specific 4-H project. Listed below are some ideas for club meeting programs.

- Project demonstrations/illustrated talks by club members

Dale Pracht, Judy Butterfield, and Joy Jordan. 2007. UF/IFAS Extension. Gainesville, Florida. Revised 2014.

- Project talks or panel discussions by club members or others
- Slides, movies, videos, guest speakers
- Judging contests or activities, games, quizzes, skill-a-thons, etc.
- A project activity – something for the fair
- Working on the club's community service-learning project



## Recreation and Refreshments

Clubs that have fun will be more active, do more things and get along better. Fun should be included in every club meeting. This is also another good way to use your older club members in a leadership/mentoring role. There are a number of recreation guides and game books available at your local bookstore. Songs may also be considered as a form of building relationships and having a good time.

Refreshments may occur at many club meetings. Refreshments should be simple, inexpensive, and nutritious. You could have a Refreshment Committee where each month someone different brings the refreshments – another way to get parents involved. If you have refreshments, you can also make it a time to promote good nutritional habits – serve veggies and fruit instead of the sugary snacks. Whether or not refreshments will be served at club meetings, as well as how to provide them, are decisions which should be made in concert with other parents.

Here are some ideas for the recreation part of the meeting.

- Songs
- Recreation
- Team-building Activities
- Ice-breakers
- Games
- Trust Activities
- Refreshments

## Planning a Good 4-H Club Meeting

Good meetings take place in a safe and inclusive environment. As the club leader you can help to make meetings both enjoyable and educational. At each meeting include activities that members feel are important to them. Involve club officers and members in planning meetings and you will be able to stimulate continuing interest. You should meet with your club president and possibly other officers a few days prior to your club meeting to assist with planning the agenda. Or better yet, have them plan the agenda for you. As a result of proper planning, you will have meetings that are fun and provide quality learning experiences. Well planned meetings give the members an opportunity to:

- Make new friends
- Share ideas
- Learn physical, social, intellectual, and emotional skills
- Enjoy recreational activities and develop healthy lifestyles
- Develop self-confidence and leadership
- Participate in decision making
- Develop a sense of pride
- Form cooperative attitudes
- Develop positive relationships with caring adults
- Value and practice service to others

## A Regular Meeting Day, Time, and Place

A club can't accomplish its goals if it doesn't meet often enough. How often is enough? This depends on the club, its members, and their projects. However, all clubs should meet at least once a month. Many clubs meet as often as once a week. Except for a major holiday month, around

county fair time, or summer vacation, clubs should meet throughout the year.

A 4-H club needs to meet regularly at a regular place and time. Moving a meeting date to meet the whims of the group may help get more members to a meeting in the short run. However, in the long run, members may become confused about meeting dates. Irregular meetings can also make it difficult for new members to merge well into the club.

The best way to set an acceptable meeting schedule is for the club to vote and to abide by majority rule or consensus (where everyone agrees). This is generally done at the first (organizational) meeting when the club is established. It is included in a club's by-laws. After that, it should change only when the membership and its needs drastically change. (In that case, a revision of the club by-laws would be needed.) Obtaining parental support for the meeting schedule is helpful in maintaining member participation.

The length of your club meeting will depend on the ages of your members and the business and activities you have planned. Younger members sometimes have earlier bedtimes and this may affect evening meetings on school nights. Be clear when meetings start and finish and then start and finish at those announced times.

### Create a Positive, Welcoming and Fun Atmosphere

Use the seating arrangements to create a feeling of informality and friendliness. Think about how the individual feels and reacts in different room set ups such as rows, larger circles, table groupings and even pairs. More is learned when a positive atmosphere is created by casual seating. Different seating arrangements can be used to help break up fixed groups. Hearing and participation will also be better in a casual arrangement.

Every meeting should include a variety of experiences. Plan for a balance of business, learning and recreation. A planning committee of members and parents will be helpful in insuring that meetings meet the needs and interests of all the club members.

Activities for early arrivals help the group develop a spirit of togetherness. Members can plan and lead games to help others have fun.

Helping everyone feel welcome and accepted is vital to enthusiastic participation and cooperation. This could also be the time where you have your refreshments instead of at the end as everyone is leaving. Activities for early arrivals may include:

- Set up meeting room
- Scrambled word games
- Outdoor sports (supervised)
- Puzzles
- Board games
- Indoor sports (supervised)
- Set up exhibits
- Singing
- Crafts



### Looking Ahead

Will your members come back? Anticipation is half the fun. If members of your group are to remain active and involved, they need to look forward to the next meeting. Make sure they know the date, time and place. Alert them to the focus of the program, and be sure individual members know their specific responsibilities.

As you and your club members learn more about 4-H, you may want to expand your interest and go beyond the basics of business, project work, and recreation. Ideas

for other educational and service-learning programs are numerous.

Possibilities include the areas of health, safety, citizenship, environmental stewardship, community service-learning, and cultural understanding. A variety of fun activities adds enthusiasm and enjoyment to club meetings.

\*Refer to the **4-H Volunteer Training Series** documents located at the Florida 4-H website (<http://florida4h.org/volunteers>)

## Reference

Diem, Keith G. *What Makes a Good Club Meeting?*. 2005. Clemson Extension, South Carolina.