



4-H Club Meetings That Youth Choose to Attend

A 4-H Club is a great venue for learning, group interaction and fun to take place. The meeting environment and meeting components are important aspects to consider when creating a club that youth choose to attend.

4-H Club Meeting Environment

The Environment of a club meeting includes all of the things that make people feel comfortable when they attend.

Location and Room Set Up

Is your meeting in an easy location to find and get to? If it is not near an outside door, are there signs to guide people? Is the room comfortable? In your location can you have a permanent sign about your meeting date and time?

There are a number of ways to set up the room to facilitate your meeting. If you want better discussion, consider putting the chairs in a circle or horseshoe. This arrangement facilitates conversation/business and the 4-H members can see each other, which will help them get to know one another. The members are more apt to stay attentive throughout the meeting as it is more difficult to withdraw or space out without being noticed.

Making Families Feel Welcome

Greeting people when they first enter the room is a way of making people feel welcome. It can be intimidating to go into a place where you do not know anyone, so that greeting can break the ice. Likewise, even for current member families it is nice to be greeted when you walk in the door.

Nametags are a great idea to help people get acquainted. It helps everyone learn names. Clip on nametags for all members and their parents could be in the meeting supply box.

New families may not know the 4-H Pledge, the 4-H Motto or even the procedure that is followed at a 4-H club meeting. Consider a "Greet Sheet" with some of those basic instructions. Also consider putting signs or banner up in the meeting room to help with the pledge, motto, agenda...

Getting People Involved right Away

If a family arrives a little early, what is there to do while they wait? What kinds of things can you have going on prior to club meetings to promote and encourage people being on time?

IDEAS - Judging classes, puzzles, games, worksheets, learning centers, project displays, a sign in sheet or sign up poster for future activities...

A Safe Environment

It is important that the members and their families feel both physically and emotionally safe in the club environment. The meeting place should be well lit, be in good repair and be free of hazards. Volunteers should be trained to work with youth and families. Bullying, and inappropriate behavior and language should not be tolerated.

Other Thoughts About the Club Environment

Play mood music, put up posters, signs, charts or thought provoking quotes, use paper in unusual shapes for note taking.

Components of the Club Meeting

A number of things have to be accomplished at 4-H Club meetings and no two clubs are exactly alike. Planning your time is the key to having a fun and successful meeting. We will look at three major components of club meetings: Group Building, Group Decision Making and Programs & Activities. If you think about your club meeting as a pie graph, you want to split the meeting up into close to three equal sections, or about 1/3 of the time for each component. This allows for a change of pace through out the meeting and keeps meetings interesting. Some months certain components will be larger.

Club Component: #1 Group Building - includes any of those activities that help everyone get acquainted, feel accepted and recognized.

Get Acquainted

Kids join 4-H all year long. Are you incorporating activities that will help new 4-H members get acquainted with other club members?

Ideas Find your twin or opposite sheets
Name game with an action
Name game with an item from the store

Often times in these games each person has to say everyone else's name(may cause stress). A variation is to have the entire group repeat the names each time, reinforcing the names and putting no one on the spot.

Celebrating

When you complete a project do you celebrate as a group? The Kansas Publication "Celebrating with 4-H Ceremonies" suggests the following types of ceremonies for 4-H Clubs: Recognition ceremonies (to honor work done by individuals or the club), welcoming ceremonies (to show importance of being a member of a group), special observance ceremonies (holidays, special weeks, events), campfire, flag raising and lowering and citizenship ceremonies.

Ideas Take time to celebrate. What does that mean to the kids in your club? It may mean a picnic, a swimming party, a skating party, a camp out or a trip top a local museum. How do the members want to celebrate?

Evaluating

Do you get everyone's opinion after a project to know how it could be improved and what people thought went well? Often adults have a very different idea of how an event went or worked, so it is also important to get club member opinions.

Ideas Often it is hard to speak up in a big group. Consider breaking the club into small groups to evaluate a project and report back to the big group.

Recreation

Often recreation is the first component of a club meeting to get cut because meetings run long or the meeting is on a school night. For very young children this may be the one part of 4-H they can do best! Recreation should be a part of every meeting. It helps members continue the atmosphere of fun and interest as well as get to know one another. Recreation is another opportunity for your group to work together and express themselves.

Recreation is not only about athletics, sports or competition. A good recreation program will be a varied program. Some possible activities include small group games, charades, relays, active sports, hikes, skits and stunts, quiet games, singing talent, folk games and parties.

Ideas What about having Recreation first so you never run out of time?

Be sure to help recreation leaders understand the importance of varying the routine and finding games and activities that are inclusive.

Club Component # 2 Group Decision Making - In a 4-H Club, decision making should be happening in the business meeting. The business meeting should take about 1/3 of your monthly meeting time or about 15-20 minutes.

The club business meeting should be democracy in action. During 4-H Club meetings, members learn to express themselves in a group, listen to the views of others, use votes to reach decisions and abide by majority rules.

The 4-H Club Meeting will most likely be the member's first experience with parliamentary procedure. Parliamentary procedure is abstract and hard for some adults to understand, and yet it is still what most of our 4-H clubs use for decision making, so it will take some coaching and reinforcement.

Ideas Try having a parliamentary procedure tip at each meeting.

Break into small groups and practice, especially during those meetings where you have lots of new faces.

Experiment with other ways to build consensus and make decisions.

Use printed agendas for everyone or have a flip chart/chalkboard in view with the agenda on it.

Club Component #3 Programs and Activities - This is the educational part of your program.

The Program or Activity portion of your meeting should also take between 15 and 20 minutes or about 1/3 of the meeting time. Often clubs think only about talks and demonstrations in this portion, but there really are a number of things to do in this program and activities component.

Member Talks and Demonstrations or other presentations - This is a great opportunity for members to give their presentations in a supportive atmosphere.

Ideas If a large number of kids in your club is making it hard to schedule everyone, consider breaking the audience in two parts and have two talks going at the same time.

Ask members to consider giving team demonstrations. By pairing younger and older 4-H members together they both gain from the experience.

Be flexible with presentations. Younger members may like to do show and tell and some members may like to put up a project display that they can briefly talk about and then talk one on one with people during the refreshment time or after the meeting.

Giving a health tip, safety tip, citizenship tip or thought for the day is another way members can get experience presenting in front of a group and provide education to the club at the same time..

Guest Speakers are available in every community.

Ideas Check with the Chamber of Commerce for a list of organizations and non profit groups in your community.

Ask your Extension Agent to give a program.

Make sure the youth in your club are getting the opportunity to contact some speakers and do the introductions of the speakers at the club meetings.

Program time can be used for project work or community service projects.

Ideas Have your club choose one project that they would like to be enrolled in as a club. Use the time to do a club wide project meeting.

A number of community service projects can be done in a short amount of time, or projects can be broken into small increments over several months.

Project Bowls, Judging and Skill-a-thons - All of these activities can be learned or practiced in the club setting.

Other Ideas for Club Meetings

Enhancing 4-H Projects

Do you ask for project group reports at the meeting?

This is a great way to get project leaders some much needed recognition and possibly get others motivated to get started!

Does your club take one project as a club?

Are you putting project groups in charge of service projects once in a while?

Foods and Nutrition Project members ought to be able to coordinate the food drive for the club. Plant Science members ought to be able to coordinate the bulb planting project. The whole club can be involved but that leadership opportunity helps those coordinating youth apply what they have learned in their projects.

Club Spirit and Fun

Club spirit will resonate with members long after their 4-H days are over. They will always remember the fun things they did as a club.

Club T-shirts, floats in community parades, booths at community events, club achievement ceremonies, club talent shows and so many more activities will contribute to 4-H club spirit!

Do things with splash and flair! Appeal to more than one sense!

Don't just collect food each month, collect based on the food guide pyramid or have a theme, green things during March, Sweet things during February, things made with wheat during June...

Supporting the County Program

For one of your activities try the 4-H newsletter quiz.

Are you making time for a county council report?

Are new families made aware of county events and activities and their significance?

Club Traditions

Most 4-H Clubs have traditions that have been long standing. Traditions in 4-H clubs help us feel like we belong and they make important statements about our club.

Those traditions or patterns will be remembered by many. If your club is new or has lost some of the old traditions consider starting some new traditions. As time goes by some old traditions may need to evolve a bit as well.

Club Tours - Going from house to house to see gardens, animals and projects before the fair.

Parents Night - The parents and other adult volunteers run the meeting, do the project talks, lead the singing, games... Lots of laughter involved.

Roll Call - Creative roll calls are more fun and allow everyone a chance to take part. Answer with your favorite winter sport, flower, summer treat, your birthday cake choice ...

One club in SW Kansas assigns every member a country and for roll call each month they each report on one aspect of their country, ie population, industry, language...

Exchange Meetings - Have your meeting with another nearby club.

Information for this Resource Adapted from:
Is Your Club Flat? - Beth Hinshaw and Mike Cole
Creative Ideas for "Jazzing up" Your Meeting - Diane Mack and Janet Fox



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