



New Jersey 4-H *Head + Heart + Hands + Health* Leader Training Series



Parents: Helping Your 4-H'er Succeed

4-H is a family affair. Both parents (and guardians) and members need to be committed to participating in 4-H. The following are suggestions to make 4-H a positive experience for all.

Family Participation

Parents/guardians are welcome to stay at club meetings as an observer. However we do ask the following of you:

- If you have any questions or comments during the meeting, please make arrangements with the leader to discuss them at a mutually convenient time.
- Regular meetings are for the members only. If younger siblings come along because of childcare considerations, please be sure they are respectfully quiet and away from the meeting area while it is in progress. Check with the leader about bringing younger siblings to field trips or activities. Not all programs are appropriate for younger children.
- If you find the leader might need another set of hands, please offer your assistance to the leader.

Field trips and activities: Often your child will attend outings or special activities in 4-H. Please make arrangements for your child to attend these functions as this will enhance their 4-H experience. Keep the leader informed if your child will not be able to attend. If you are available to assist with these special activities, let the leader know.

The Do's and Don'ts of Being a 4-H Parent/Guardian

DO's

- **DO** take time to learn about 4-H, what it stands for and how it operates.
- **DO** be sure your child arrives for meetings on time and is picked up promptly when the meeting ends. If your child needs to miss a meeting or event, please contact the leaders ahead of time.
- **DO** advise your son or daughter in selecting 4-H projects. Help them select a project they are interested in, have the ability to accomplish and is one for which you can help furnish needed materials, facilities, financing, and guidance.
- **DO** show your interest and enthusiasm for the 4-H projects selected. Find out what is suggested for members to do and learn. Encourage your child to work on the project and record keeping all year long and not to wait until the last minute.
- **DO** encourage your child to participate in county and state events, such as public presentations, camp, fair, project clinics, workshops, and other activities.



- **DO** keep the purpose of the 4-H project in perspective. Realize that a project is simply a teaching tool and a method for involving boys and girls in a worthwhile activity. Above all, remember that your child is more important than the 4-H project.
- **DO** keep in mind that the most important goal of 4-H is personal growth of the individual.
- **DO** give encouragement when your 4-H'er succeeds and even more when he/she fails. Judging and awards are not final exams. Whatever ratings are given or scores received, help your child to see progress made, things that have been learned, and goals that have been reached.
- **DO** offer your home for 4-H meetings; volunteer your hobbies and talents to 4-H leaders; provide transportation to other members.
- **DO** be tactful—with 4-H leaders, agents, judges, and your child.
- **DO** remember that 4-H leaders and judges are often volunteering their own time for the benefit of your child; don't forget to show them your appreciation.
- **DO ASK QUESTIONS!** If you have questions, please take the time after meetings to ask them.
- **DO** let your children make mistakes. Sometimes it's the best way to learn.

DON'TS

- **DON'T** do your child's project for them, even though you may be able to do it faster, better, easier, and with less mess.
- **DON'T** discourage a child's enthusiasm by providing too much corrective influence or criticism.
- **DON'T** let the desire to win overpower your child's ability to learn. Do keep in mind that the 4-H experience should be an educational one.
- **DON'T** schedule family vacations which conflict with your child's 4-H schedule. Check with the leader for county fair dates. All 4-H members love the fair; encourage your child to participate.
- **DON'T** re-live your childhood experiences through your child.
- **DON'T** view your child as an extension of yourself. Don't view his/her success or failure as a reflection of your ability or worth.
- **DON'T** assume your child is always right. Keep open communication with the leaders.



Parent's Pledge

I pledge my HEAD to give information to help my child see things clearly and to make wise decisions.

I pledge my HEART to encourage and support my child, whether he has successes or disappointments.

I pledge my HANDS to help my child's club; if I cannot be a leader, I can help in many equally important ways.

I pledge my HEALTH to keep my child strong and well for better living through 4-H, for my child's club, our community, our country, and our world.

Making the Best Better

Ask yourself why you wanted your child to join 4-H. Winning competitive awards provides recognition but it is not the purpose of participation. Your child has the opportunity to master life skills, develop a sense of belonging, gain independence, and experience the rewards of giving to others. Be a supportive parent and help your child and 4-H leader "To Make the Best Better!"

*Revised by Karen Mansue, Jim Nichnadowicz, and Ginny Powell.
Written by Ginny Powell.*

For More Information

Welcome to 4-H! A Guide for New 4-H Club Members and Their Parents



Did You Know...

The National Association of Extension 4-H Agents was organized in 1946 to provide professional development opportunities to Extension agents with 4-H program responsibilities.

For more information on New Jersey 4-H, please visit www.nj4h.rutgers.edu.

Cooperating Agencies: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and County Boards of Chosen Freeholders. Rutgers Cooperative Extension, a unit of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, is an equal opportunity program provider and employer.