



Selecting a 4-H Project

In New Jersey, many 4-H Clubs emphasize one project where all members work on the same subject. Often project selection is made before joining any club. A 4-H'er who has been involved in the 4-H Cloverbud program may have been introduced to a number of project areas before becoming a regular member of a club. Some youth come into the program knowing what they would like to do or which club they want to join.

Even with these opportunities, it is possible to come across a youth who may need help finding an interest. In 4-H, youth have the chance to learn about a project area in depth over several years or may enjoy learning about something that interests them for only a year or two. Sometimes it may be a combination of the two.

Selecting a 4-H project can be a big decision for 4-H members and their parents. Parents, leaders, and the youth must be involved in this process for a rewarding 4-H experience. Four major factors go into the decision:

- *Time.* Youth are busier than ever today with sports, church, friends, extracurricular activities, music lessons, and other youth programs. Be realistic with the amount of time a 4-H'er has for a project in which they are interested.
- *Interest.* This may sound too simplistic, but what is the 4-H member truly interested in? What skills do they already possess? What do they want to learn about?
- *Space.* What is the space required for a project area? Large backyard, barn, work space in the garage?
- *Resources.* Are there adults who are willing and able to share their knowledge? Are there financial constraints? (Many projects can cost a lot.) Is it possible to fundraise to do this project? Is transportation an issue?

Leader's Role

As a leader, you play an important role in helping youth select a project for the year. You are the liaison between the parents and the office. Many times, the 4-H staff does not meet the parents until well into the 4-H year.

Obtain a listing of current projects offered and/or a selection of available project guides and project record books from your county 4-H Extension office.

Plan a meeting to give a brief overview of several project areas. Allow time for the 4-H'ers and their parents to look at different project materials. Discuss whether adults are available to help with specific projects. Also discuss time, money, and supplies required for the project. Finally, discuss what to do if the project the 4-H'er wants to work on is not offered.

Use the following page to help youth decide on a project.

How Many Projects Can a Member Take?

The number of projects a member takes depends on:

- The age of the 4-H'er
- The experience of the 4-H'er



- The ability of the 4-H'er
- The amount of money involved/available to the 4-H'er
- The time available to 4-H'er/leader/parent
- The ability of a 4-H'er to work with minimal direction
- The time needed to learn about and participate in other parts of 4-H beyond project work, i.e., public speaking, trips, camp, other county events

Goal Writing for 4-H Members

A big part of your 4-H year is having goals. Having goals is like going on a trip. You need to know where you want to go so you know when you've arrived! Goals are important and are useful for any 4-H project. Your record books have a place for you to record your goals at the beginning of the 4-H year. Bring your book to your club meetings to help remember to work towards meeting your goals. There are two kinds of goals: ones for yourself and ones for your club.

Here are some hints for setting and working towards goals:

- Use a club meeting early in the year to set your goals. This time is a great opportunity for your club to set goals as a group, and you work together as a team and hear what others in your club would like to do.
- Seek advice from your leader or parent on what some reasonable goals will be for you. Adults who know you can help.
- Don't try to fit too much in one goal. You can usually tell if there are a lot of "ands" in the statement.
- Use a club meeting near the end of the 4-H year to talk with your leader and other members about which goals you have met and which ones you need some help with.
- It's okay if you don't meet a goal... you can keep it for next year!
- If you feel bored with your goal, that's a sign it may be time to try something new or more challenging.

Writing Goals

Setting and writing goals does not have to be hard. Think of what you want to learn during the year and write it down. Good goals start with "I" statements:

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>I will learn</i> | <i>I will decrease</i> |
| <i>I will go</i> | <i>I will produce</i> |
| <i>I will attend</i> | <i>I will promote</i> |
| <i>I will do</i> | <i>I will improve</i> |
| <i>I will give</i> | <i>I will participate</i> |
| <i>I will teach</i> | <i>I will increase</i> |
| <i>I will work</i> | <i>I will...</i> |

Remember this is NOT creative writing, but creative thinking!



Sample Goals

Most 4-H project record books include sample goals you might use. Below is a sample list of goals to pick from if you are having trouble deciding where to start. Some may seem easy, and others may seem hard. They may not be the best goals for you unless you add or take away something from them until they fit YOU just right. Goals should be challenging but not too hard! Ask your leader for help. Others in your club may want to learn the same things!

General 4-H (includes Leadership/Citizenship) Goals

- I will learn more about 4-H in other states.
- I will learn how the county government works.
- I will write my congressional representative about an issue that I really care about.
- I will learn about how the federal government works and report it to _____.
- I will learn about how the state government works.
- I will attend 100% (or 90% or 70% or _____ %) of my club meetings this year.
- I will learn how to set up a file system for important documents (like report cards, judging sheets, letter of recommendation, my 4-H membership card, etc.)
- I will teach other youth how to _____.

Animal Project Goals

- I will learn how to groom my animal.
- I will give vaccinations to my animal.
- I will learn about how to prevent rabies.
- I will teach my _____ to _____.
- I will exercise my _____ every _____.

Horticulture Goals

- I will learn how to take cuttings.
- I will learn how to care for bulbs.
- I will learn how to force bulbs.

Arts and Crafts/Fine Arts Goals

- I will learn how to work with watercolors.
- I will learn how to work with acrylics.
- I will learn how to work with something I've never used before.

Photography Goals

- I will learn how to focus a manual camera on a subject.
- I will learn how to center and crop a picture to make it interesting.
- I will learn how to tell a story using pictures.



4-H Projects That Look Interesting To Me - Project Selection

Name _____ Year _____

Instructions

As you and your parents review different project materials, list the ones that look interesting to you. Put a check by the statements under your choices that are true. The more checks you have, the more likely you will have a successful project.

Project _____

- _____ There is a leader for this project.
- _____ My parents will help with this project if no leader is available.
- _____ I have the money for expenses this project will require.
- _____ I can earn the money to pay for this project.
- _____ I have the time to do this project.
- _____ I have the ability to do the work in this project.
- _____ My parents will allow me to work on this project.
- _____ My parents will arrange transportation to project meetings.
- _____ My parents will get me to county events.
- _____ This project will help in meeting my goals.
- _____ I really want to work on this project.

If more than one project interests you, complete a worksheet for each project.

Keep this worksheet in your record book.

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Reference: Powell, Ginny, *Leaders' Notebook* (Ohio 4-H)

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

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