



How to Start a 4-H Club

Ways in Which 4-H Clubs Operate

- Community based clubs typically meet in the evenings or on weekends and offer self-chosen, multiple learning experiences and activities.
- In-school clubs meet during school hours. They have officers (except K-3) and planned activities beyond school enrichment.
- After-school clubs are organized within child care settings. They have officers (except K-3) and planned activities.
- Military 4-H clubs are organized by the Armed Forces, often on military installations, and principally for military dependents.

Getting Started

1. Begin by recruiting at least five members from three different families. Grade requirements for 4-H members are:
 - 4-H Cloverbud member—grades K-3. Refer to *NJ 4-H Cloverbud Program: 4-H for Younger Members (Grade K-3)*.
 - Standard 4-H Club member—grades 4-13 (13 is one year out of high school).
2. Organize your club at the first meeting. If convenient, you may want a separate session for parents. Invite parents to the first organizational club meeting and tell them how important it is for them to come. Encourage parents to attend meetings and to become involved whenever and however possible. It's usually best to make specific requests for help from individuals, based on their interests and abilities. However, under no circumstances should adult involvement in the club overshadow member participation! Refer to *Parent Involvement in 4-H* and *Parents: Helping Your 4-H'er Succeed*.
3. What to do at the first meeting (or shortly thereafter):
 - Describe available 4-H projects to the members (those projects you're willing to lead). Ask members to select, or at least begin to think about, projects to be carried by the club.
 - Select a name for the club. (Refer to *Selecting a Name for Your 4-H Club*.)
 - Complete the Club Charter application and also the 4-H Club By-laws template provided by your 4-H staff. This is required before you can be recognized as an official 4-H Club. (Refer to www.nj4h.rutgers.edu/policies, see "club charter policy" under "club related policies.")
 - Cloverbud clubs (K-3rd grade) do not have officers. For standard clubs (4th-13th grade), ask for nominations and elect officers for the club. Depending on the size and type of club, typical officers might include: president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and reporter. (Refer to *4-H Club Officers Make the Meeting*.)



- Ask all members and leaders to fill out the appropriate registration forms provided by 4-H staff. Be sure all are complete! Deliver or send these forms to the county 4-H office as soon as possible. Members and leaders are placed on a 4-H mailing list to receive regular 4-H newsletters and other important information.
 - Each new member should receive a copy of *Welcome to 4-H! A guide for new 4-H members and their parents*. Copies are available from your county 4-H office.
 - Decide on a *regular* club meeting schedule, which includes date, time, and place.
4. Obtain necessary materials for 4-H project(s), such as member and leader/project guides and project record books from your county 4-H office.

Suggestions

1. Keep in contact with the 4-H office. Feel free to ask for help or materials. The 4-H office is always a busy place, but the staff and secretaries will do their best to help you promptly. Remember to send *Club Meeting Reports* regularly. Copies are available from the 4-H office and also online at www.nj4h.rutgers.edu/publications (see *Club Meeting Report*). This keeps the 4-H staff informed of your club's activities and may be printed in the 4-H newsletter so other 4-H clubs will know what your club is doing.
2. Recruit co-leaders if desired. At the very least, ask for parental support. SHARE the workload!
3. Review the main points of the most recent 4-H newsletter at club meetings by reading aloud so members will know what's going on in the total 4-H program. Encourage all members to participate in a variety of county 4-H activities.
4. Encourage parents as well as members to read the 4-H newsletter and access the website.
5. Attend county 4-H leader meetings, workshops, and forums. This will keep you informed of details about the 4-H program, and also provide an opportunity to share ideas with other 4-H volunteers and learn from their experiences. Participate in your county leaders' association as well as your project advisory committee.
6. Keep your leader information/orientation materials and other 4-H information, such as the 4-H newsletter, "on file" for future reference.

Your decision to serve as a volunteer 4-H leader is sincerely appreciated!

*Revised by Gloria Kraft and Ginny Powell.
Written by Keith G. Diem.*

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

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