



How to Conduct an Effective 4-H Meeting

Making a Difference

As the adult leader, your guidance conducting meetings can have a life-long impact on youth members. Each member should have the opportunity to experience four essential elements of positive youth development:

- Master new skills while having fun.
- Make new friends and be a friend to others.
- Share responsibilities and serve others.
- Increase self-reliance and self-confidence.

Meet Frequently

How many meetings are sufficient? 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, or around county fair time, clubs should meet throughout the year.

Balance Work and Play

Every meeting should include three components:

- *Business session* — The officers should run this part of the meeting, with leader guidance. See *4-H Club Meeting Agenda*.
- *Social interaction* — Plan an activity.
- *Educational program/project work* — This is generally guided by the leader. The program portion could be work on 4-H projects, a guest speaker, and/or public presentations given by members.

Select a Regular Meeting Day, Time, and Place

A 4-H club needs to meet regularly at a designated place and time. Changing 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 adapt to the club.

The best way to set an acceptable meeting schedule is for the club to vote and to abide by majority rule. This is generally done at the first (organizational) meeting when the club is established. The meeting schedule is included in a club's by-laws. After that, it can only be changed with a majority vote for change in by-laws. Obtaining parental support for the meeting schedule is helpful in maintaining member participation.



The Order of a Business Meeting

4-H club officers conduct and lead a 4-H business meeting with guidance from you, the leader. Help officers to understand their jobs and write an agenda in advance. Refer to *4-H Club Officers Make the Meeting*.

Business meetings follow a specific procedure:

- Call to order when the meeting opens—(president)
- Pledge of allegiance, 4-H pledge, song, or other opening—(vice president)
- Roll call—(secretary)
- Reading of the minutes of the last meeting—(secretary)
- Treasurer’s report—(treasurer)
- Correspondence—(secretary)
- Reports of committees
- Old or unfinished business left over from the last meeting—(president)
- New business—(president)
- Next meeting date
- Adjournment when the business meeting is over

Minutes of a Meeting

It is the secretary’s job to keep the minutes of each meeting. The minutes should be a record of what is done, not what is said. They should contain:

- Date and place of meeting
- Names of members and visitors present
- Approval of previous minutes
- All reports and what was done about them
- All motions with the name of the person who made them and whether the motion was carried or lost
- The time the meeting was adjourned
- Any programs, refreshments, or recreation that happened after the meeting



Making and Voting on Motions

A member who wants the club to vote on something makes a motion. That member raises one hand, or stands, and waits to be recognized. After being recognized by the president, the member says, "I move that..."

Another member says, "I second the motion." This means that at least one other member thinks the club should consider it. (If the motion is not seconded, it is dropped.)

The president then asks for discussion. When discussion stops, the president asks, "Are you ready for the question?" If no one requests more discussion, the club is ready to vote.

The president states the motion so everyone can hear it. The members vote when the president says, "All in favor say 'Aye,'" and, "All opposed say 'Nay.'"

The motion is passed if more members vote "Aye" than "Nay." If the president is in doubt about the vote, he or she should ask for a show of hands or a standing vote.

The president then says, "The motion is carried," or "The motion is lost," according to the vote.

Ways to Vote

- *Voice Vote* – The president says "All in favor of the motion say 'Aye.'" "All opposed say, 'Nay.'"
- *Standing Vote* – The members stand so their votes can be counted.
- *Show of Hands* – The members raise their hands so the president can count their votes.
- *Ballot* – The president and helpers hand out blank slips of paper so the members can write down their vote.
- *Roll Call* – Members vote, one at a time, as their names are called.
- *Honor System* – All members close their eyes and vote by raising one hand. Leader and president count votes.

Sample 4-H Club Meeting

President: *Will the meeting please come to order? John Jones will lead us in the pledge of allegiance and Maria Martinez will lead us in the 4-H pledge.*

Member John Jones: *Let's all stand and say the pledge of allegiance.*

Members: (vice president leads) *I pledge allegiance...*

Member Maria Martinez: *Let's all say the 4-H pledge.*

Members: (vice president leads) *I pledge my head...*

President: *The secretary will call the roll.*

Secretary: *Today we will answer the roll by telling what we did on our project last week.*

(There are many different ways of answering the roll, which you place in the 4-H secretary's book.)



Member Nancy Tate: *I dyed different kinds of cloth and put the samples in my record book.*

Member Ken Washington: *I taught my dog to heel.*

Member Rick Less: *I set out some tomato plants in my garden.*

Other Members: (Tell what they did.)

President: *Will the secretary read the minutes of the last meeting?*

Secretary: *The meeting was called to order by...*

President: *Are there any additions or corrections to the minutes? (Pause.) If not, they stand approved as read.*

President: *Will the treasurer please present the financial report?*

Treasurer: reports money received, money paid out, and the balance on hand

President: *Are there any questions? If not, the treasurer's report is accepted.*

President: *Has any correspondence been received?*

Secretary: reads aloud any letters, cards, or other correspondence addressed to the club

President: *Will the committee chairs please present their reports?*

Committee: report activities of the committee since the previous club meeting

After each report, the president asks if there are any questions. If there are no questions, the president says, "The report is accepted as presented." If there are questions and if the report needs something done about it, the president asks for a motion (a request that something be done).

Each motion must be seconded, discussed, and voted on before another motion can be made.

President: *Is there any unfinished business? (Business left from the last meeting can be discussed at this time.) Is there any new business? (Club members discuss new business—future plans for club activities, things to be done before the next meeting, etc.) Are there any announcements? (Club members or leaders make announcements). If there is no further business, is there a motion to adjourn?*

Member: *I move that the business meeting be adjourned.*

Member: *I second the motion.*

President: *All those in favor of the motion say "Aye." Those opposed say "Nay." The motion is passed (if more members vote "Aye" than "Nay"). The business meeting is adjourned.*

Rules of Brainstorming

Vary the kinds of things done throughout the year. Encourage officer/member involvement. Help them decide what they want to do most. As an adult leader, your primary duty is to guide the members in setting goals and following through with their action plan.



Decision Making by Consensus

The way a group makes decisions greatly influences how people feel about the group and how well the group members support a decision.

If the decision made by the group is liked by the members, they feel as though they have 'won'. If the members do not like the decision, they will feel as though they have 'lost'. A good decision for the group is one that is understood, carried out, and supported by its members.

The term consensus means that the entire group supports the decision. Consensus decision making is a cooperative team-effort. A process of selecting options that are understood, supported, and carried out by a group.

How to Make a Decision by Consensus

1. Identify the problem, situation, or issue that requires a decision.
2. Brainstorm a list of alternatives. Record all ideas. The more ideas the better. No idea is to be judged, discussed, or rejected.
3. Test each alternative. What would happen if....? Choose a member to record the results of the testing. **Caution: Remind the 4-H youth that only the alternative solution is being evaluated, not the person who made the suggestion.** Change, rewrite, or discard the alternatives.
4. Take the list of rewritten and/or saved alternatives to the problem where everyone can see them. Use group discussion as the process for ranking the alternatives. If your group is very large, sub-divide into smaller groups so everyone will have an opportunity to say what they think. If more ideas are needed, brainstorm more solutions.
5. Make your decision. After the group has discussed the alternatives, they are ready to choose the preferred solution. The solution receiving the highest number of votes is the preferred decision. The decision should be written on newsprint or chalkboard or poster so everyone can see it.
6. Implement the decision. Decide who will do what? When? How? Where?
7. Evaluate the results of the group decision.



Recreation/Creative Play

For 4-H'ers to feel a part of the group/team they need to:

- Feel they belong, are welcome, and needed.
- Share in planning and goal setting.
- Know that their ideas are heard.
- Feel that the group is doing something worthwhile.
- Share in the way the group will work toward common goals (rules).
- Know what is expected.
- See that progress is made.
- Have confidence and trust in the leader.

Recreation/Creative Play

Recreation can be a highlight of your 4-H club meeting, depending on how you conduct it. Creative play is an opportunity for you and your club members to learn while having fun together.

Goals for Fun

Remember, whatever the goal for playing, the main reason youth play games is ! So, be sure to put in their ! Having a goal for play will help you, the teen leader, or the game committee know what kind of game to choose to play. Is your goal:

- To burn off excess energy?
- To work on developmental skills? (Example: problem solving skills.)
- To work on individual behavior skills? (Example: self-control; following directions.)
- To work on physical abilities? (Example: develop coordination.)
- To work on basic motor skills? (Example: running, jumping, balance, etc. This goal will apply to almost any game you choose for younger members.)



Play Hard, Play Fair, Be Safe, Have Fun!

Keep your play on the , focus on cooperation.

- Set the limits of acceptable behavior.
- Encourage team work.
- Avoid games that eliminate people.
- Redesign favorite games that eliminate people to include more and more people.

Cooperative Play

What is cooperative play anyway? It is any activity where the focus is on common characteristics. For instance, games that group people by birthdays, hair color, clothing color, etc. focus on our connections. This opens the door for everyone to see more subtle connections as the club continues to do things together.

Getting and Holding Their Attention

Before you can lead youth, you need to have their attention.

- Maintain active listening through eye contact. Make sure you are the one facing the sun.
- Creative Sound: Use any mix of high, low, variable speed, or intonation. Examples: horseracing banter, whistling, whispering, different accent.
- Collaboration: Make a deal with 2 or 3 youth. They will start laughing, clapping, snapping their fingers, or stomping their feet. Everyone's attention will soon be on you.
- Rituals: Teach mini-games to use later whenever you need everyone's attention. Example: Hand signal used in football for time out, "Freeze" (stop where you are!) "Islands" (nobody touching anyone else.) "Dead Ants" (everyone gets on their back with feet and hands in the air). Have all the necessary equipment ready for the games you plan to play.

Be Prepared!

Know the directions for the game. Explain the directions clearly. Get their attention.

Stop While You Are Ahead

Stop the game while their enthusiasm is still high! Channel their enthusiasm to the next planned activity—another game, project activity, etc.



Revised by Gloria Kraft.

Adapted from original titles:

What Makes a Good 4-H Club Meeting? by Keith G. Diem

Running a Smooth 4-H Business Meeting by Judith S. Baillere

Decision Making by Consensus by Betty Ann Smith

Recreation/Creative Play by Rose Mary Bergman and Betty Ann Smith

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

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