



Planning a Successful Field Trip

Field trips can be a great contribution to the 4-H philosophy of learning by doing. 4-H members can observe and participate in a real-life 4-H project-related experience. Here are some suggestions to make a field trip fun, safe, and educational:

Develop a Plan for 4-H Project Learning Activities

Instead of deciding what to do at the last minute, try to plan ahead. This will make it more fun for the kids and less stressful for you. Think of creative ways for youth to learn what they need to in the 4-H project using a variety of methods. Involve them in planning and doing. Consider the following as you plan for project activities, such as field trips:

- What will be learned?
- What teaching methods will be used?
- Will there be opportunities for hands-on experiences?
- Field trips make good introductions or summaries of projects.
- To make it fun, consider a theme and wear special hats, clothing, or costumes that fit the location and purpose.

Identify a Variety of Potential Field Trips

Look for places that:

- Match needs of project.
- Are relevant and interesting to youth (give them choices when possible).
- Are affordable.
- Are close by.

Some Field Trip Ideas

- Bird sanctuaries and wildlife refuges
- Historical sites and museums
- Natural attractions, including state and national parks
- Hiking, biking, walking, canoeing
- Farms, orchards, greenhouses, nurseries
- Factories and corporations
- Hospitals and veterinary clinics
- Airports, train stations, bus terminals
- Cultural festivals
- Supermarkets and other retail stores
- Zoos, hatcheries, aquariums
- Radio and television stations, newspapers
- Police and fire stations
- Restaurants and bakeries



Make Contact with the Site to be Visited

- Call in advance.
- Make reservations if needed.
- Find out if there are fees; ask for group rate discounts and check methods of payment.
- Visit site in advance if possible.
- How accessible is the site for people with disabilities?

Arrange Transportation

- Busses, vans, or cars? Family-owned or rent? What about using public mass transit?
- How much time will trip take?
- Have maps and directions available for all drivers.
- Share costs of fuel and tolls spent by drivers.
- Getting there can be half the fun. Consider side trips, singing and games along the way.

Don't Forget the Essentials

- Food (bag lunches, buy from restaurant, etc.).
- Lodging, if overnight.
- Name tags help the group know each other and the public identify participants who may wander astray.
- Where are the bathrooms when you get there? Will stops be needed along the way?
- What is appropriate clothing? (Ex. Type of shoes to wear or not to wear.)
- Money for food, entrance fees, souvenirs, etc.
- Cameras, camcorders.

Recruit Adequate Adult Supervision

- Have at least one adult for every 10 youth. Get more adults for young children or for potentially hazardous activities. At least two adults are required as chaperones for overnight events or trips.
- Explain roles and responsibilities to adults. Make sure all are working from same rules and expectations! Adults are there to have fun also, but their main job is serving as a chaperone!



Have Youth Participants Complete “4-H Event Permission Forms”

Youth participants on a field trip must complete the 4-H Event Permission Form. This form has several important parts: parental permission, health information, and behavior agreement. The most important reason for using this is to make sure parents are aware of what type of activity their children are participating in. Refer also to the fact sheet *Liability of 4-H Volunteers*. Bring completed forms with you and save after trip.

Have Adult Chaperones Complete the Adult Overnight Agreement Form

If the trip is overnight, all adult chaperones must complete the *4-H Event Release/Agreement Form for Adults*. If it is a day trip, it is still a good idea for all adults to complete a form, since it provides important health information which will be needed in an emergency.

Prepare 4-H'er for the Trip

- Explain where they are going and what they will do or see.
- Agree on rules of behavior and safety.
- Encourage them to devise questions to ask when they get there.
- Identify some of the things to look for.

Focus on Safety

- Bring first aid kits. Try to bring along adults with first aid or C.P.R. training.
- Keep kids together. Do periodic head counts.
- Break into smaller, more manageable groups. Have check-in times if the group splits up.
- Assign “buddies” (pairs of youth who will look out for each other).

Capture Experience for Memories

- Photos/videography
- Scrapbook(s)
- Participant diaries

Evaluate the Experience/Share Reactions of Participants

- What did participants learn? How did the experience relate to the 4-H project or real life?
- What did participants dislike? Why?
- What could be improved?



Say Thank You!

- Have kids decide how they want to thank people (handwritten notes, big cards with group signatures, send souvenirs, mementos, post cards, etc.)
- Write thank you notes/letters to all who helped (parents, chaperones, tour guides, etc.)

Share What Was Learned with Others

- Send a 4-H Club Meeting Report to your county 4-H Office. Many counties print such highlights in the county 4-H newsletter.
- Give public presentations to other clubs and to the public (such as to local service organizations).
- Create an exhibit to display in public places and at the County 4-H fair.

Don't Have Time or Money to Go on a Field Trip? Bring the Field Trip to You!

When you can't go to the "field," bring the field to you. This can be done by videography, guest speaker, demonstration, games or simulations. Let kids use their imagination and natural curiosity. Be creative and then nothing is an obstacle to fun learning - in your home or in the field.

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

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