



Preparing for 4-H Fair/Show Exhibits

4-H Fairs or shows are often the highlight of the 4-H year. From a youth development perspective, fairs allow 4-H members to display projects and to participate in educational experiences critiqued by an adult expert. Shows provide opportunities for 4-H members to demonstrate new knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes. Fairs provide a showcase for recognition of youth and allow an avenue for youth people to practice the life skills of teamwork, cooperation, communication, sportsmanship and club pride and unity.

Youth Responsibilities

4-H members need to establish a timeline to work on their 4-H projects. They should set realistic goals on what they want to accomplish and set realistic completion dates. Be sure to read the rules and regulations outlined in the 4-H section of the fair book as well as the 4-H "fair" newsletter. Pay close attention to deadlines and specific requirements for each project. It may be helpful to highlight the wording in the fair book for each project in which members are enrolled. 4-H members need to do their own project work and complete it in the current year. Members will want to refer to the conference judging materials that are available on the 4-H web site (www.4-H.uiuc.edu/staff/fieldstaff.html) under Enrollment and Fair – Judging – Conference Judging Fact Sheets or obtain these fact sheets from their local Extension office. By reviewing these written materials, members may become more comfortable with discussing their projects with the judge. Judging score sheets for individual projects should also be available.

Parent Responsibilities

Parents are encouraged to help 4-H members obtain the materials and resources needed to complete 4-H projects. Adults may answer questions, demonstrate skills, and offer guidance on project work but should not do the work themselves! Parents need to be familiar with the exhibit guidelines and judging schedules so they can help members be ready and on time for the various judging events. Adults can offer encouragement as young people prepare for conference judging and can provide support and reflection as youth complete the judging experience. Some counties offer parent meetings to help families become familiar with the "fair experience." Take advantage of these sessions!

Volunteer Responsibilities

4-H leaders are a valuable asset when assisting members in their fair preparations. Volunteers are the link between the Extension office and the families. Be sure that 4-H families have the materials they need (project manuals, fair book, entry forms, and newsletter) to adequately prepare. Fair superintendents, 4-H curriculum committee members, project leaders, and older youth enrolled to similar projects can also answer questions and help members prepare their exhibits.

Club Responsibilities

Clubs are encouraged to conduct a meeting where projects that are going to be exhibited at the fair are brought in and a mock judging occurs. This allows the members to practice the "question and answer" period of conference judging and provides adults with the opportunity to offer "last minute" suggestions for finalizing projects before the fair. Invite parents to attend along with the members and use this meeting as an opportunity to provide feedback and recognition to individual members and to promote club unity and pride.

4-H exhibits at a fair or show are designed to showcase the work of young people to others in the community. It provides young people with the opportunity to demonstrate skills and knowledge as well as to gain ideas for improvement. 4-H members are encouraged to try something more challenging each year and to practice good sportsmanship. Exhibiting is designed to be an enjoyable educational experience not just a contest. Enjoy the fair experience!

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