



# Effective 4-H Club Meetings

## LEADER LETTER

Club or group meetings are the cornerstone of the 4-H experience for boys and girls. Ask beginning members or participants what they like about 4-H, and they will tell you about their club, their new friends, new experiences, and fun activities. Well-planned meetings allow youth to

- Acquire new knowledge and share ideas
- Develop self-confidence and leadership
- Participate in decision making
- Develop responsibility and commitment
- Make new friends
- Enjoy recreational activities

### Setting the Stage

Young people like to be active and take part in the club's program of activities. The volunteer can make it easier for them to participate by "setting the stage" for involvement and learning.

#### *Pleasant Meeting Place*

Ideal meeting places have plenty of light, comfortable temperature, and adequate space and facilities for planned activities. Room arrangement is important. Set the room to fit the activities. Youth need to see and hear everyone during discussions or demonstrations. Providing tables and chairs for officers may give them support and confidence. A flip chart or small blackboard may be useful to record ideas.

#### *Comfortable Atmosphere*

Young people feel best and gain the most when they are at ease. Youth need opportunities to get to know each other, to talk together, and to build trust. Get-acquainted games, team-building activities, small group discussions, and committee work are ways to create positive situations where members feel free to join in.

#### *Feelings of Acceptance*

Each person wants to be an active part of the group, but sometimes he or she needs help. Provide opportunities for members to contribute to the club. Many groups accomplish this by getting members involved through club offices, committees, demonstrations and talks, community service, fund-raisers, and group projects. The

key is to enable all youth to participate with specific jobs and responsibilities.

#### *Planning Ahead*

The initial work for a 4-H meeting takes place long before the actual gathering. The planning committee develops a yearly plan in the beginning of the club's year. This plan includes the who, what, when, and where for club meetings and activities:

- **Who** is responsible?
- **What** is going to happen?
- **When** is it taking place?
- **Where** is it being held?

Advisors need to work with officers or committee members before meetings to help them prepare and complete assignments.

### What Happens at 4-H Club Meetings?

Meetings offer a variety of experiences for youth. Meetings include business, project work, educational programs, community service, recreation, and social activities. All of these may not be a part of every meeting, but each should be included during the year for a well-balanced program. With the assistance of the 4-H volunteer leader, participants decide what to include and when. A meeting outline can provide structure for conducting a meeting.

### Sample Meeting Outline

#### **Business: 15 to 20 minutes**

The business section should demonstrate democracy in action. Members learn how to express themselves in a group, listen to the views of others, come to consensus, reach a decision, and abide by majority rule. It is important to keep meetings interesting and educational. Unless it is an annual business meeting, don't let the business component become the heart of the 4-H club meeting.

The following is a typical business agenda:

- Call to order
- Pledge of Allegiance and 4-H Pledge

- Roll call with members answering in any way the group decides
- Minutes of the previous meeting
- Treasurer's report
- Committee report
- Old business
- New business
- Adjournment

**Education and Project Work:  
30 to 45 minutes**

Learning by doing is one of the 4-H program's unique strengths. This is the place for members to give demonstrations, work on project books, or participate in tours, community service, and other activities. Use a variety of activities to involve members in program planning, self-esteem development, and decision making. Ingenuity and creativity can make this section of the meeting interesting and active. Providing work space during project work makes learning easier.

**Recreation and Social Activities:  
15 to 25 minutes**

A variety of fun activities add enthusiasm and enjoyment to the meetings. Some clubs have a different recreation committee for each meeting, while others elect recreation officers for the year. A few ideas include games, charades, relays, sports, puzzles, parties for parents, picnics, and hikes. Refreshments can be a part of recreation, with different members responsible for them throughout the year.

**Tips For Effective Meetings**

- Start and stop on time.
- Limit meeting time to 1 or 2 hours of well-planned activities that will hold interest, help reach goals, and be fun. The club officers and advisors set the standard for the group.
- Let the officers fulfill their responsibilities.
- Let the president call the meeting to order and be in charge. Let other officers and committee chairpersons do their assigned jobs.

- Allow volunteers to help officers develop confidence in their abilities by providing guidance, while remaining in the background.
- Encourage the use of parliamentary procedure.
- Support democratic participation by allowing all members to have a chance to express themselves. Basic parliamentary procedure is an orderly way of making this possible.
- Communicate upcoming events, dates, and responsibilities. Use a variety of methods including telephone calls, personal visits, media reports, written notes, newsletters, and telephone chains to convey the message to members and parents. Repeat important dates and events at several meetings. Distribute county and club calendars, constitution, project requirements, and copies of assignments to each family. Communicate with parents about club meeting locations and beginning and ending times.

*Set Behavior Standards*

Youth need to know what is expected of them. Youth and volunteers should come to consensus about behavioral expectations early in the year. Meetings are excellent places to learn and practice good citizenship and respect for people and property.

*Plan Meetings With Variety*

Remember this formula to plan meetings: one-fourth business, one-half education, and one-fourth recreation. Mix it up with lots of variety to keep interest, encourage learning, and have fun. Keep the business section effective and to the point.

**Conclusion**

Know what needs to be accomplished at each meeting. Make sure each member has a chance to do and learn something at every meeting. Keep youth involved and include lots of variety to help them learn and grow through club work.



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