



# Taming the Wild Cloverbud

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From kindergarten through high school, youth pass through four developmental stages. Generally, child development specialists have divided up the ages and stages of development into these categories:

- 5-8 year olds--Early Childhood
- 9-12 year olds--Middle Childhood
- 13-15 year olds--Early Adolescence
- 16-18 year olds--Middle Adolescence

This publication will focus on Early Childhood Programming for 4-H Youth.



Young people may exhibit characteristics in all these age groupings at any point as they grow and develop. These groupings are meant simply to give you a general idea of what we might reasonably expect from any given age and how to consider these elements when designing and implementing 4-H programs. They serve as guidelines for working with youth but not as measures of achievement. Please remember: children develop at their own pace, all characteristics will not be observed in all children at the same age or at the same stage of development.

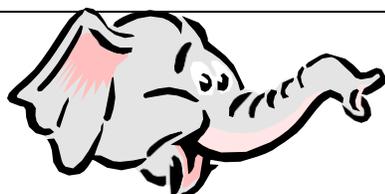
For each child, consider uniqueness, needs, and interests. To do this, keep in mind the following two basic development principles:



Age is not a perfect predictor of maturity. Most children go through a predictable order, but ages at which they do this vary enormously. An activity that is well within the capability of one child may be much too difficult for another child of exactly the same age. Providing a choice of activities or providing multiple levels of difficulty within one activity is the ideal.



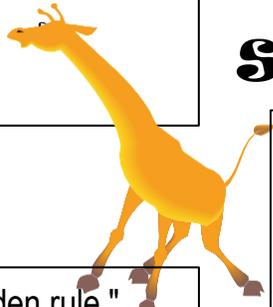
Growth may proceed at different rates in various developmental areas within an individual child. A child who is advanced physically may be average in terms of mental ability and below average in terms of emotional or social growth. A child may need different experiences in each of these areas to reach his or her full potential.



# Characteristics of 5-8 Year Olds

## Physical

- ◆ Are mastering physical skills
- ◆ Have better control of large muscles than small muscles
- ◆ Slow, steady growth



## Social

- ◆ Are learning how to be friends and may have several "best friends" at a time
- ◆ Opinions of peers are becoming more important. Often care more about being successful in front of peers than parents.
- ◆ Are beginning to better observe other people
- ◆ Are beginning to experience empathy for others, but still learning about and wrapped in self
- ◆ Are family-oriented
- ◆ Dependence on another adult besides parent becomes a new experience

## Emotional

- ◆ See fairness as "the golden rule." Cooperative games are especially enjoyable. Competition with others is inappropriate.
- ◆ Seek parental or adult approval but are becoming emotionally steadier and freer from parents
- ◆ Tend to behave in ways to avoid punishment
- ◆ Like to play games. Rules and rituals become paramount, but not yet ready to accept losing.

## Intellectual

- ◆ Generalize from their own experiences. Very concrete at this age--like to see it, hear it, taste it, feel it, smell it.
- ◆ More interested in process than the final product. Will continue working on a project rather than completing it.
- ◆ Base their thinking in reality and accuracy.
- ◆ Are learning to sort things into categories and series.
- ◆ Are beginning to develop a sense of cause-effect.
- ◆ Handle well only one mental operation at a time.
- ◆ Can distinguish between reality and fantasy—but still afraid of scary figures.
- ◆ Enjoy activities that are real and tangible. You must demonstrate an activity--not just verbally describe how to do it.



# 10 Parameters for 5 to 8 Year Old Children in 4-H



Many states have 4-H programming for five to eight year-olds, often called "Boosters," "Cloverkids," or "4-H Prep." New Mexico has the "Cloverbud" Program.



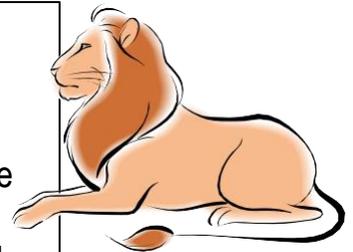
The purpose of the 10 parameters is to help 4-H professionals and volunteers make decisions regarding developmentally age-appropriate programming. The parameters are consistent with the K-3 Youth in 4-H: Guidelines for Programming (National 5-8 Curriculum Task Force, 1991) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children's position statement on developmentally appropriate practice in the primary grades, serving 5 through 8 year-olds

The goal of 5-to-8-year-old programming is to promote healthy development in children by enhancing life skills (social-interaction, self-esteem, physical mastery, making choices, and learning to learn). Therefore, the primary question for Cloverbud Leaders to ask themselves is: does the activity meet program objectives to promote healthy development as outlined in the following parameters:

## 1.

### Activity Based:

Variety of short term experiences. Cloverbud-aged children have short attention spans, especially if there are distractions around them (Enns & Akhtar, 1989). The time spent in each activity should be kept at 20 minutes or less to hold their attention.



## 2.

### Cooperative-Learning Centered:

Activities and curriculum are done in small groups as opposed to doing projects or activities alone. With children, it has been clearly proven that cooperative learning produces higher achievement, social skills through positive relationships, and healthier psychological adjustment (self-esteem) than competitive or individualistic programs (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991).

## 3.

### Non-competitive:

Children are engaged in curriculum activities that are noncompetitive without setting-up categories or classes that create inequities. Non-competitive activities and cooperative learning are directly related to one another. Children have a difficult time psychologically understanding winning and losing. Competition is almost always connected to external awards and approval. Children in non-competitive environments are more likely to develop confidence, creativity, and competence than do children in competitive situations (Ames, 1981; Dewey, 1916; Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

# 4.

## Fair Exhibits

Fairs are open to participation for Cloverbuds, but for exhibit only. Children can exhibit work completed in their Cloverbud clubs or groups. It is important to make sure that it is non-competitive and equal recognition is given to all participants. This does not mean that young children cannot be given advice or tips on how to improve their exhibit or work.

# 5.

## Activities are developmentally age appropriate:

The activity should be designed at their age level (5-to-8-years-old). Cloverbud-aged children have limitations in what they can physically do, mentally understand, emotionally comprehend, and how they socially interact. These limitations exist because 5-to-8-year-olds are still developing physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. Some brief characteristics of 5-to-8-year-olds include deficiencies in: body control, eye-hand coordination, reaction time, endurance, sharing, taking turns, completing tasks, accepting criticisms, making decisions, understanding another person's point of view, attention span, being realistic, and thinking logically (Humphrey & Humphrey, 1989).

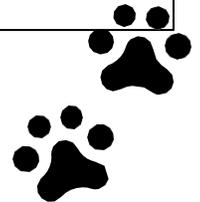
# 6.

## Activities are safe for children:

Special considerations must be given to ensure the safety of Cloverbud-aged children. Many 5-to-8-year-olds are not aware of realistic dangers surrounding animals, kitchen appliances, and outdoor activities (bicycle riding, etc.). Children often do not understand adult instruction, nor the consequences associated with not following directions (Shutske, 1995). Therefore, Cloverbud activities must be low risk and safe, even if a child does not participate as directed.

# 7.

## Cloverbud Activities are Distinctly Different than 9-19 Year Old Programming:



	Cloverbuds	9-19 year olds
Type of Learning	Activity Centered	Project Centered
Type of Instruction	Leader Directed	Self-study, Individual, and Leader Directed
Recognition of Standards	Participation	Achievement
Recognition of Goals	Participation	Competition, Achievement
Learner Resources	Activity Manual	Project Manuals

# 8.

## **Curricula are success oriented:**

Allow children to gain confidence and promote self-esteem by mastering Cloverbud activities. Cooperative and non-competitive settings are ideal for children to experience success and be more optimistic about themselves. Self-esteem and optimism are by-products of doing well and being successful (Seligman, 1995).



# 9.

## **Animals and animal subject matter should contribute to Cloverbud objectives and parameters:**

Any animal activity should meet the above parameters and Cloverbud objectives such as promoting self-understanding (self-esteem) and social-interaction skills. Animals can serve as excellent subject material for Cloverbud curricula, although because of safety, liability, and competitive reasons some restrictions may be necessary to maintain program objectives. More specific reasons for being cautious with direct animal involvement are as follows:

- a. *children eight and under often lack the mental and physical skills for controlling and understanding the strength of large animals (Livestock Conservation Institute, 1994). Some children between the ages of 5 and 8 lack these abilities to be successful when involved with animals;*
- b. *working with livestock and animals is the leading cause of injury in Ohio for children on the farm as compared to farm machinery, grain silos, etc. (Bean & Wojtowicz, 1993);*
- c. *Young children need to have the strength, balance, and attention span to adequately manage and ride animals (American Medical Equestrian Assn., 1993).*

# 10.

## **Activity is fun, positive, and focuses on general life skill areas:**

The activity is enjoyable, not tedious. Attention should be given as to how the activity contributes to the life skills of self-understanding, social interaction, learning to learn, physical mastery, and decision making.

- a. *experience - the group engages in some type of activity or experience;*
- b. *share - the group shares reactions and observations;*
- c. *process - the group discusses how questions are brought out by the exercise;*
- d. *generalize - the group explores common ideas or truths about the experience;*
- e. *apply - the group talks about applications of the new information.*

## **References**

- Scheer, Scott D. (1997). Programming Parameters for 5-to-8-Year-Old Children. *Journal of Extension*, 35, 4. The Ohio State University 4-H Youth Development.
- Lindstrom, Jim (2003). Positive Youth Development. Volunteer Training Modules. Washington State University 4-H Youth Development.



# Cloverbud Program Check Sheet



When evaluating a chosen activity or program for Cloverbuds, ask yourself the following questions:

- |   | YES                      | NO                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Is it activity based and short termed?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Does it involve cooperative learning in which children work with and not against each other?                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Is it non-competitive and are children equally recognized?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. If Cloverbud children are involved in a fair, is it for exhibit only and are they not competitively judged?                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Is the activity safe?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Is the activity developmentally age appropriate keeping in mind their physical, social, mental, and emotional characteristics? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Is the activity intended for Cloverbud children as opposed to members in the 9-to-19-year-old program?                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Are the curricula success oriented? Can the children do the activities successfully?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Does the animal material contribute to Cloverbud objectives and parameters?  | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |
| 10. Is the activity fun, positive, and focused on life skill areas?   | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |

If you answered yes to all of the questions then you probably have an excellent activity to use with the 4-H Cloverbud Program. If not, explore modifications and discuss them with other Extension professionals specializing in preadolescent education or youth development.