

CONDUCTING 4-H CLUB MEETINGS

4-H meetings are the center of the 4-H club program. The meeting affects the club as well as each member. There are no rules for the ideal meeting. Every 4-H club is a little different. Your club meeting should be organized to meet the needs of your club and its members. Here are some guideposts for conducting meetings that will be good learning experiences for your members.

- ◆ **Choose the best possible meeting places. Your choice can affect what the club accomplishes.** Meeting places should be well lighted and have a comfortable temperature with good ventilation. Try to arrange seating so everyone can see. And, find a place that has convenient work space. All of these things create a desirable atmosphere for work and enjoyment.

Meeting at homes gives members a chance to serve as hosts and hostesses. If parents can see the 4-H program in action and they know that is needed for meetings, they can help improve the meeting situation.

Atmosphere often determines behavior. Use the 4-H and American flags to help set the tone of your meeting. If you don't have flags and would like a set, your county Extension agent can tell you how to obtain a set.

- ◆ **Plan your work, and work your plan.** Planning ahead with offices and committees makes the program move faster and helps accomplish goals. Short, snappy, action-packed sessions are interesting and have purpose. Boys and girls want challenges and worthwhile activities.

Members take part more wholeheartedly if they help plan an activity.

- ◆ **Start and stop on time.** You and the club officers set the standard for the group. Time is valuable. Two hours, well planned, can hold interest, reach goals and be fun. Habits, good or bad, are formed by practice. Teach your members to use their time resources wisely. Parents appreciate punctuality too.

- ◆ **Give officers responsibility and let them act.** The president should call the meeting to order and be in charge. Other officers and committee chairmen should do the job given to them. You'll need to guide, but stay in the background, to give them confidence in themselves and their abilities.

- ◆ **Encourage parliamentary procedure.** In a democratic club, each member has a chance to express himself. Parliamentary procedure is an orderly way to make this possible. It's really a set of good manners for respecting the views of others. Be sure it is used to give freedom, and not to force action before everyone has a chance to speak. Explain the procedure to all members. They should know how to make a motion, address the group express themselves and make decisions. The President's book is a good reference on parliamentary procedure.

- ◆ **Encourage each member to take part.** Business, project work, community services, and social activities can be exciting and fun it: "I belong to the group and am active in what the group does." Watch and listen. Some members need encouragement; some need to slow down. Your faith in each persons' ability will make many things possible. Keep a record of what each member does. This will help you guide their progress.

- ◆ **Help the group set behavior standards.** Members need to know what is expected of them. Club meetings are an excellent place to learn and practice good citizenship. Personal cleanliness, neat dress and appearance, mutual respect for people and property are important qualities that should teach. Every club meeting is an opportunity to teach by example and discussion.

4-H meetings offer a variety of experiences that add to the growth of boys and girls. The meeting contains business, project work, other educational programs, service, recreation, and social activities. All of these will not be a part of every meeting, but each should be included during the year for a balanced program. You and the members decide what to include and when.

In a democratic 4-H club, each member has the right and freedom to express himself, and to participate as he desires for the good of the group. Encourage democracy in your club and in the following ways:

- ◆ **Let members plan their activities.** Ask questions to help them think and plan. Help them see ahead and then contribute your ideas as needed. Guide them but let them make the final decision.
- ◆ **Ask members instead of telling them.** Ask members what they think. Ask their opinions. Listen to what they say. Your questions can encourage them to think and make decisions.
- ◆ **Give all members a chance to participate.** A 4-H member will be more interested in activities if he has a part. A little job may be a big opportunity to a beginner. Teach and practice parliamentary procedure at each meeting. Knowing how to participate in a business meeting may encourage a 4-H'er to be active in school, church, and other community activities. 4-H'ers learn cooperation, concern for others, and citizenship through participating in group programs.
- ◆ **Encourage a free discussion period during each meeting.** Talking, listening and planning in a group is basic to democratic action. A 4-H'er learns to express himself through practice.
- ◆ **Teach members to accept responsibility.** 4-H'ers learn by doing, not by having the advisor do for them. Form the habit of asking yourself, "Can a member do this?" You may need to help at first, but gradually let the member take over.
- ◆ **Praise democratic participation.** Praise members for their participation, group planning, group decisions, initiative and leadership.

Community activities offer further democratic experiences in 4-H. As members think and plan what they can do to improve the community, they develop a feeling of citizenship and responsibility. As they work together for a common goal, they build cooperation and club spirit. They also acquaint others in the community with 4-H.

A democratic 4-H club keeps its members interested. They do the thinking, planning, acting, and achieving. They experience the thrill of group endeavor and achievement. They learn to be adults who know how to live and work in a democracy. The advisor who helps build such a club demonstrates the highest type of leadership.

BEGINNING MEETING TOPICS

- ◆ **Getting Acquainted:** New Games - Recreation
- ◆ **Member/Parent Orientation:** What is expected of them as 4-H members during the year. Use O.P.E.R. form as discussion outline.
- ◆ **Project Orientation:** Project options available in your club, purpose of projects, project work at home and at meetings, project demonstrations, project requirements for completion and fair exhibit, project selection process, project help.
- ◆ **Parent Expectations:** What do you expect of parents in relation to meetings, projects, trips, fair exhibits, judging, etc.

BEGINNING MEETING TOPICS CONTINUED

- ◆ **Club Meeting:** Notification, times, places, frequency, usual agenda, special meetings or activities, trips, tours, service projects, fund raising.

CLUB MEETING OUTLINE

This club meeting outline may give some ideas for conducting a meeting.

- ◆ **Purpose:** State what you want to accomplish and how you plan to do it. This should gain the members' attention and arouse their interest. When everyone knows from the beginning what is to happen, less time is wasted and goals can be reached.
- ◆ **Business:** (16-20 minutes usually) You the teen leaders or a parent should work with club officers to make the business meeting fast-moving and interesting. Don't take over and don't interfere - let the officers do the leading. Follow parliamentary procedure and assist officers privately if they need help.
- ◆ **Educational Programs:** The amount of time you spend depends on what you wish to accomplish. These may be a part or separate from the regular meeting. Some examples are:
 - Health - physical and dental check-ups, fund drives, speakers, tours of health department, hospitals, nursing homes, nutrition programs, exercise and fitness activities, first aid and home nursing instructions, and immunization programs.
 - Safety - hazard hunts, safety speaking activities, accident studies, safety skits, slogan contests, or special presentations on highway safety, lawn mower safety, or slow moving vehicles.
 - Citizenship - visit local government offices, have public officials speak to the club, tour to historic sites, learn and practice flag etiquette, and conduct mock elections.
 - International - IFYE hosts or sponsors, 4-H Care programs, Pen Pals, Sister clubs overseas and Teen Caravans. Involve parents and community people where possible in conducting or presenting these programs.
 - Demonstrations - by club members are one of the most important learning experiences for members.
- ◆ **Project Work:** (40 minutes to 1 hour) The project is the tool that 4-H uses to guide the growth of boys and girls. Projects teach responsibility, self reliance, self expression, creativity, initiative, decision-making and many other personal qualities. Projects also help youngsters learn about specific subjects and build skills. Work with each member as he choose a project and sets goals for the year.

The project book is a teaching tool. Use it at each meeting, make assignments and refer to it. Check to see that members are studying and keeping records of their progress. Have members do some of their project work at the meeting. You may include demonstrations, talks, discussions, tours, movies, and work sessions as teaching methods. Occasionally you should talk with each member and check his or her progress toward project goals.

- ◆ **Recreation and Social Activities:** (30 minutes usually) This feature can be at the beginning or at the end of the meeting. Vary the time and content to add zest and enthusiasm. An occasional surprise can be fun. Your recreation leaders may want to include games, contests, skits, plays, music, stunts, or refreshments. They need to look for new ideas, inspiration for creativity, and leadership. Encourage cooperative games that involve all members.

- ◆ **Refreshments:** (10 minutes) Many clubs do have a very light snack usually at the end of the meeting. It should not involve great expense and members often take turns in bringing the snack. It does provide an opportunity for some social time when parents, advisors, and members can talk.

- ◆ **Community Service Projects:** Good community service projects are hard to beat for promoting 4-H in your community and county. Every club should conduct at least one service project each year. Community service projects not only help the community, they also build citizenship, respect, pride, and a feeling of satisfaction in 4-H members.

These are only a few suggestions for club meetings. You'll want to attend county advisors' training sessions, talk with members, other advisors, and Extension agents in the county for more ideas and experiences. There are many different ways to have good 4-H meetings, and it can be fun to see what works best for your club.