

★ What is a 4-H Club?

A 4-H club consists of 5 or more school-age youth, guided by two or more adult volunteers. The 4-H Club's goal is long-term youth development, which encourages its participants to learn life skills that will help them grow into healthy and productive citizens. A 4-H club is an informal, educational youth opportunity, which serves as a "hands-on" laboratory for helping youth grow. Adults and 4-H members work together to plan the club calendar. 4-H clubs provide opportunity for leadership. The 4-H year runs from October 1st to September 31st and a club meeting is recommended at least monthly. Club meeting times and locations are varied

Types of Clubs

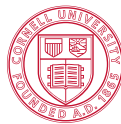
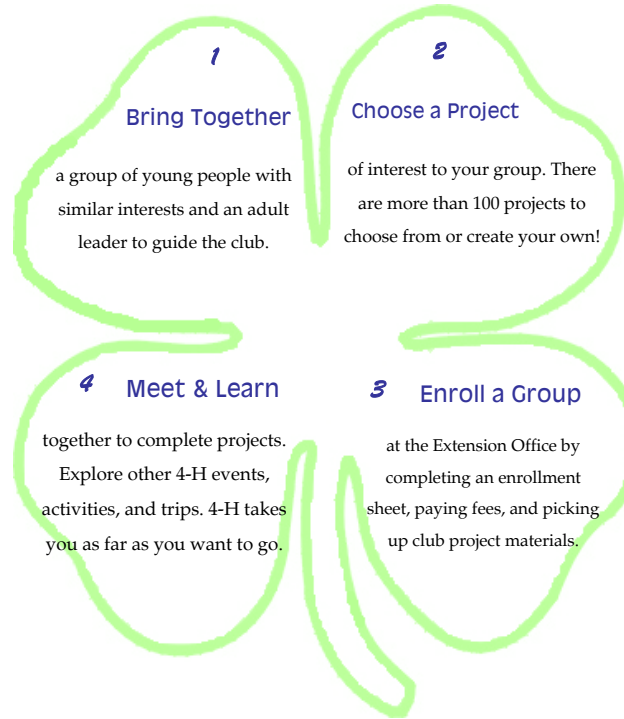
Neighborhood 4-H Clubs are groups of youth (5 or more) that are led by adults (often parents/guardians). They meet in schools, churches, community centers, or homes to complete a variety of 4-H projects throughout the year. Some clubs are countywide and others include members mostly from one community.

4-H School Clubs and After-School 4-H Clubs - When 4-H curricula are utilized within the classroom during regular school hours or in an after-school program outside of regular school hours the group of children who participate on a regular basis is considered to be a 4-H club. The classroom teacher and/or other resource people who teach the subject matter serve as club leaders.

Sponsored 4-H Clubs - A government agency, religious group or other youth serving organization may sponsor a 4-H club. Sponsored clubs usually meet at the agency's facilities and are led by agency staff (paid and/or volunteer).



4-H...as easy as



Cornell University Cooperative Extension Clinton County

6064 State Route 22, Suite 5
Plattsburgh, New York 12901
Phone: 518-561-7450
Fax: 518-561-0183
E-mail: ask37@cornell.edu
Web: www.cce.cornell.edu/clinton

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The 4-H Club: Getting Started

4-H is a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills.

★ Chartering

The Club Charter identifies a group as an organized 4-H club that is authorized to use the 4-H name and emblem for educational purposes. The Charter stays with the club as long as it is in existence. All chartered clubs are expected to operate within the framework of the 4-H program. The charter does not have to be renewed when leaders change or minor revisions are made in the club structure. A charter application should be submitted soon after the club has elected its officers and met the other eligibility requirements. All 4-H clubs must be chartered.

★ What a Club Meeting Looks Like

The way club meetings are structured depends largely on the size of the group and the age of the members. In general 4-H meetings are divided into 3 segments:

- **Business Meeting** through which members learn how to conduct a meeting and practice democratic decision-making.
- **Educational Program:** usually project work, but may involve special presentations or activities conducted by resource people, parents or older members.
- **Refreshments and Recreation**

★ New Club Organizational Meeting

The very first meeting of your club will help set the framework for all your future activities. If you'd like, a 4-H staff member or experienced volunteer can meet with the leaders and parents of your new club to help you get started. Here are some things to decide at this meeting:

- Where to meet
- When and how often you will meet
- How parents will be involved (who will help in what ways)
- What the first 4-H project or activity will be and potential future activities
- Which countywide 4-H activities the club will participate in
- Estimation of the money needed to cover the costs of projects and activities and how money will be raised (club dues, individual member purchases and club fundraising)

★ The First Few Meetings

It is very important to get off to a good start. There is a lot to be accomplished during the first 2 meetings of a new club. Everyone should leave these meetings feeling that they have had a good time, that they understood and contributed to what went on and that they know what will happen next. Because of this, you may want to arrange for a 4-H staff person, experienced leader or 4-H teen to attend these meetings and provide guidance as needed.

First meeting

- Select a Club Name – Your club's name should be unique within your county, should include "4-H" and should be able to stand the test of time, not trendy or too juvenile to be acceptable as members grow older.
- Learn what the four H's are and what the clover symbolizes
- Learn the 4-H Pledge & Motto
- Learn the responsibilities of club officers and conduct elections
- Start work on a project

Second meeting

- Club officers conduct the club's first business meeting. Teach the basic rules of order as the meeting progresses.
- If time permits project work can continue after the business meeting.

Succeeding meetings

Proceed with project work, meetings and activities according to the club's plan.

★ Involve Junior Leaders

Junior Leaders are 4-H teens who partner with adults to provide leadership for 4-H clubs and countywide 4-H activities. Depending on age and experience a junior leader can serve as a general assistant, teach a project, mentor individual members, coordinate activities or assume almost any other 4-H leadership role under the supervision of an adult.

Involving junior leaders in your club program not only "lightens the load" for you, it also adds a spark of energy and enthusiasm, provides role models for your members and gives the teens a valuable opportunity to practice their leadership skills.

★ Involve Parents

Everyone benefits when parents are involved in the 4-H club program.

- 4-H members need their own parents' support and encouragement to attend meetings, complete projects and fulfill responsibilities to the club.
- Parents have an opportunity to spend time with their children, and enjoy activities together. In many ways 4-H is a "partner in parenting."
- 4-H leaders have a lot to juggle. Being able to delegate some of those responsibilities, even the smallest ones, can be a big help.
- The community benefits when families support community-minded organizations like 4-H. Involved families are more knowledgeable about community issues and therefore more likely to support community efforts as well.

Invite parents to attend events or to lend a hand:

- Meet with parents at the beginning of each year. While members should make the final decisions about their projects and activities, it is important to know the ways parents can support the club.
- Maintain good communications. In order for parents to feel like part of the group and that they share responsibility for its success they must be kept informed about the "when, where and whys" of both the club and the 4-H club program in general.
- Create opportunities to get to know parents better. For example, hold "family days" when members can "show-off" their accomplishments and you can socialize with parents. Later requests for help can then be based on the things you know they enjoy and can do well.
- When you need help, ask an individual, basing your request on that person's interests, skills and abilities. Be honest and specific about the time commitment and time frame. Ask well in advance of when the job needs to be done.
- Express your appreciation appropriately. Regardless of how much or how little a parent has done s/he deserves a "thank you."



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