

What Parents of New 4-H Members Need to Know

The Mission of 4-H

The Rutgers Cooperative Extension 4-H Youth Development Program uses a learn-by-doing approach to enable youth to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to become competent, caring, and contributing citizens of the world. This mission is accomplished by using the knowledge and resources of the land grant university system, along with the involvement of caring adults.

How a 4-H club works

A 4-H club is usually a group of five or more kids, guided by at least two adult 4-H leaders. Each club has by-laws. It is approved by the club members and contains the rules by which the club operates. The club meets once or more each month. Some members serve as officers. They are elected by the club members. Dues are optional and decided by the club.

Cloverbud clubs provide an introduction to 4-H and a way for younger members to explore several projects. Cloverbud is designed to be non-competitive. In a **regular 4-H club**, members choose to work on at least one project in-depth. A project may be a topic like rocketry, archery, photography, small animals, or food and nutrition. It can be almost any subject that the club agrees to learn. Often a club will concentrate on one or two projects. Completed projects may be exhibited at the County 4-H Fair each summer. They are judged and awards are given for quality work.

How to get your child signed up in 4-H

If you have not already done so, he or she needs to be registered at <https://nj.4honline.com>. More details on registering on-line can be found at <http://nj4h.rutgers.edu/about/4honline.asp>. You will first set-up a family profile and then register each child as a member of 4-H. Once the registration is completed, your club leader will confirm your child's membership and the county office will make them an active member. You may use the on-line registration database to make any changes to your contact information. Members need to be in the on-line registration database to be eligible to participate in state or national events.

Where to get help

Many people in 4-H are ready and willing to help you. Here is a list of some of them:

- **4-H leader** - An adult who volunteers to help lead a 4-H club. Leaders work with club members to plan and conduct meetings and activities. Most of all, they teach 4-H members new skills.
- **4-H volunteer organization** - Every county has a group of volunteers which helps support the 4-H program. This organization works with the county 4-H agent to plan county 4-H events and to improve and expand 4-H. The name of this group varies among counties. It is often called the 4-H Association or 4-H Leaders' Association. Parents, club leaders, and other adults are welcome to serve on your county's 4-H volunteer group.
- **County 4-H Agent/Program Associate/Program Coordinator** - The professional who is responsible for administering the 4-H program in your county. County 4-H Agents are faculty members of Rutgers University. The Rutgers Cooperative Extension office in your county houses all 4-H staff who are available to help with county 4-H events, or to organize new clubs.
- **NJ 4-H Website** - There are also lots of resources online at www.nj4h.rutgers.edu

Helping your child become involved in 4-H

Being active in the club is most important. There are some basic requirements which all members are asked to complete by the end of the 4-H year to be a "Member in Good Standing." The requirements include:

- Must submit a record book
- Attend a minimum of 70% of club meetings
- Do a public presentation at the club level or higher
- Participate in a 4-H sponsored community service project at club, county, regional or state level

As a parent, you can enable and encourage your child to meet these requirements.

A parent's role in 4-H

Children need parental encouragement to get them started in 4-H and to keep them involved in the program through their teen years. You can help if you:

- **Share** - Take an interest in your child's 4-H project and activities. Listen, look, and offer suggestions, but avoid the temptation to "take over" and do things yourself. Learning by doing is the 4-H way. Your child learns by his or her mistakes as well as successes, if you provide encouragement.
- **Prepare** - Parents can assist by helping a child understand the value of having projects, duties, and presentations done on time, in a proper way. Also, be sure your child learns the importance of letting someone know if he or she cannot follow through as expected.
- **Be there** - Your child will gain more from 4-H by attending club meetings regularly and by getting involved in 4-H Camp, 4-H Fair, and many other activities. Parents can be part of 4-H, too. Don't just drop your youngster off at meetings - sit and observe. You are welcome. Get to know the club leader. Lend a hand wherever you can. However, try to remain objective and avoid "taking over" any activities. Remember, the club is for the kids.
- **Care** - Parents are expected to support their child's participation in the 4-H program to the best of their ability and to abide by the policies, procedures, and Code of Conduct set forth by the 4-H Youth Development Program. Arrange to attend programs and events where your child is taking part. Your presence shows that you consider your child, and what he or she is doing, very important.

If this club doesn't work out, try another 4-H club. Contact your county 4-H office.



...from your new friends in 4-H

By Keith G. Diem, Ph.D., Program Leader in Educational Design. Parts adapted from other 4-H publications. October 1991, revised 2016.

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