



# Effective 4-H Meetings

As a 4-H volunteer, you will have different functions. An especially important task is to prepare interesting and effective meetings where youth can obtain the greatest educational benefit while having fun.

Remember: You don't have to be a professional teacher. Any volunteer with a sincere desire to help in the positive development of youth has the ability to teach with enthusiasm.

Here are some tips on conducting effective meetings:

- Make the meeting place comfortable. At the meeting place, arrange chairs in a circle, making sure that everyone can see or hear properly.
- Get the members interest. Use an attention-getting device or activity to grab member interest. For example, you could arrange a special exhibit. Roll call could involve kids responding with the name of their favorite food.

You could also send in advance a postcard to the youth announcing the meeting. The card may suggest to the members that something interesting and special has been prepared. An illustrated demonstration could also be planned or a list of topics for the meeting passed around to the members.

- Meet them where they are. Using questions, brainstorming or a listing process can help you learn their level of knowledge, the topics they would like to learn about and subjects they would like to discuss.
- Involve every member. Ask several members to set up their meeting place, conduct games, lead songs and serve refreshments. The simple principle is "let the kids do it." That reinforces the 4-H way of learning by doing. Youth can also help plan and make arrangements before the meeting.
- Make educational presentations practical. Try to work with the type of equipment that can be found at home and that members will be able to use in their own project activities. Do not present photography or food preparation lessons using expensive or difficult-to-find materials.



When explaining complex topics, use models to explain. Whenever possible, use live animals or displays when describing animals or objects.

- Teach by association of ideas. Parts of a bike and their functions can be learned more easily when members can relate the new information to something that is already known. A recipe can be more clearly understood if it is demonstrated or explained using terms that youth understand.
- Teach basic principles. Rather than telling 4-H members participating in a nutrition project what kinds of food to eat, they should learn what nutrients are needed and their effects on their health.

- Use a variety of teaching techniques. In a meeting related to pet grooming and hygiene for example, provide several ways of learning by showing the tools to be used, discussing them, demonstrating them and having members practice with them.

Discussing and summarizing the lesson adds a higher order of processing to aid retention.

Reference: This publication is an edited and updated version of the "Texas 4-H Leaders Handbook."

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