

EIGHT KEY ELEMENTS TO A SUCCESSFUL CLUB

Every 4-H volunteer should strive to incorporate the following Eight Key Elements in formation of his/her 4-H club and the programs and activities offered to the members and their families.

1. Positive Relationship with a Caring Adult

- Serve as advisors, guides, mentors, supporters, friends and advocates.
- Helps set boundaries and expectations for youth.
- Helps youth discover their personal vision & set goals to reach that vision.

How to Put Into Action?

- Actively involve club officers and teen leaders in planning, implementing and reviewing club programs and activities.
- Express positive attributes to every 4-H club member.
- Spend time with club members – get to know them, their project interests, how they are doing on their project, etc.
- Listen, Listen, Listen! A 4-H member may really need to bend your ear!
- Encourage parents/guardians and other adults to get involved in club activities – help with a project activity, help plan a fundraiser, serve as a guest speaker, etc.
- Build time in club meetings for youth and adults (parents and volunteers) to get to know each other.
- Develop a “mentoring system” pairing older members and adults with younger members.

2. Inclusive Environment

- Promotes a sense of belonging.
- Encourages and supports all members.
- Offers encouragement with positive and specific feedback.
- Celebrates the success of all members.
- Takes pride in the collective efforts of all.

How to Put Into Action?

- Conduct get to know activities, “mixers or ice breakers”, at the beginning of club meetings with members, volunteers and parents.
- Encourage club identity and spirit by coming up with a club logo to go with the club name and using the name and logo on club hats, t-shirts, sweatshirts, jackets, barn/stall decorations, etc.
- Establish a “Sunshine or Welcoming Committee” to take new members and families under their wing. This would include introducing them to others, helping orient them to the club, project work, requirements, etc.
- Encourage club brainstorming as a positive avenue to gather everyone’s ideas for fundraisers, trips and tours, workshops, barn/booth themes, etc.
- Conduct a Club Recognition Program to celebrate the successes of all club members. Give out fun awards to celebrate the uniqueness of all members.

- Promote 4-H club activities through newspaper articles, school visits, displays at community events, etc. Seek to include diversity in your club.
- Establish Project Check Dates. These dates could be times to find out how members are doing on their projects and to give positive constructive feedback to help members meet project requirements and personal goals.

3. Opportunity to Value and Practice Service

- Service experiences foster self-worth and a caring attitude.
- Members gain exposure and connection to the larger community in a meaningful way.

How to Put Into Action?

- Have club members plan and conduct one or more community service/learning service projects.
- Involve the membership in selecting, planning, doing, evaluating and celebrating in the community service project.
- Encourage club members to participate in a community service activity related to each of their project(s).
- Establish club values that demonstrate respect, concern and sensitivity to the needs of others.
- Encourage older or more experienced club members to serve as project mentors to younger or less experienced members.
- Provide opportunities for members to teach others through demonstrations, speeches, skillathons, etc.

4. Opportunity for Mastery

- Build knowledge, skills and attitudes to demonstrate competence.
- Participate in experiential learning opportunities "Learn by Doing" to achieve mastery in a selected area.

How to Put Into Action?

- Conduct project workshops that help members through project work and build upon skills and knowledge from one workshop to the next.
- Conduct club skillathons or practice judgments to help members practice and demonstrate skills and knowledge.
- Have every 4-H member demonstrate a project skill or give a demonstration at a club meeting.
- Establish a Peer Mentoring Program. Teens or older members assist younger members with project learning experiences.
- Have a "Project Share Night" where every member brings a project they have completed and share what they learned, what they liked about it, and why others would want to take the project.
- Encourage club members to serve as peer teachers at county clinics, workshops and camps.
- Encourage members to participate in Judging, Bowl, Hippology, Skillathons, Camps, Clinics & Contests beyond the club level.
- Encourage members to compete for achievement and outstanding member recognition for excellence in 4-H work.

5. A Safe Environment

- Members feel safe! There is no fear of physical or emotional harm from the learning experience, adults, volunteers, other participants or spectators.

How to Put Into Action?

- Develop club expectations and guidelines and share these through a club orientation with members, advisors and parents at the beginning of the year.
- Select a meeting location that is welcoming to all members. Fire halls, community centers, churches, school buildings, libraries, and other public meeting locations are often the best choice, since members are often already familiar with these locations.
- Review the 4-H Youth Code of Conduct with club members and uphold the code at all 4-H functions.
- Emphasize safety at all club activities. When necessary make sure you utilize permission slips, informed consent forms, release of liability & waivers, medical history forms, supplemental club or event insurance, etc. Contact your County Extension Educator to discuss use of these items.
- Have one or more club advisors seek training in first aid, CPR, child abuse/neglect issues and reporting procedures.

6. Opportunity for Self-Determination

- Members believe they have an impact over life's events.
- Exercise decision-making and develop problem solving strategies to become self-directing, independent young people and adults.

How to Put Into Action?

- Involve club members in charting the club's course. This includes club program planning, meeting dates, times & locations, community service activities, fundraisers, project work, etc.
- Help youth set realistic project and club goals.
- Encourage parents to serve in supportive and guiding roles in selecting and completing projects. Remember: Members should be doing project work, not parents, grandparents, aunts & uncles, cousins, brothers & sisters, etc.
- Club volunteers need to serve as advisors not dictators. Always reflect on who is running the club, who is charting the course, whose voice do you hear the most at meetings – yours or your club members.
- Allow youth to learn from their successes and mistakes. Encourage creativity and be supportive to let members solve their own problems and find solutions for the club's dilemmas.

7. Engagement in Learning

- Members are excited about subject area and look for ways to build relationships and make connections to develop greater understanding.
- Learn the 4-H way from hands-on experiences "Learning by Doing".
- Education focus encourages a higher degree of self-motivation and capacity to learn and create.

How to Put Into Action?

- Have club officers or teens give leadership to a club educational program – inviting a guest speaker, arranging for a field trip, planning for a special workshop, conducting a club skillathon, assisting with a club quality assurance, safety, sportsmanship program, etc.
- Provide "hands-on" learning opportunities. Youth learn best when they can use multiple senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching).
- Make learning activities "real life experiences". Avoid learning experiences that only take place indoors, setting down and focused on listening.
- Encourage members to participate in county, regional, state and national 4-H educational opportunities. These might include Project Clinics/Camps, State Camps,

Commodity Sponsored Workshops, State Fair, Citizenship Washington Focus, Exchange Trips and many more.

8. To Be An Active Participant in the Future

- Believe we can play a positive role in future events that affect us.
- Make appropriate choices because we see oneself in the future.

How to Put Into Action?

- Encourage youth to set goals that are challenging yet achievable.
- Help youth realize some goals by planning activities that work towards achievement.
- Invite club alumni back to a club meeting to share their personal success(s).
Conduct an annual alumni meeting to celebrate the past, present and future 4-H club members.
- Help youth explore career opportunities through project work and experiences.
Invite career related speakers to a meeting or plan a tour to a related business.
- Encourage youth to get involved in leadership opportunities at the club & county level (officers, committees, camp counselor, Jr. Fair Board, etc.)

What Is Your Club Like?

Use this simple survey to assess the quality of your 4-H club in meeting the Eight Key Elements for Positive Youth Development and Successful 4-H Clubs.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Members participate in decisions related to the policies and activities of the club.					
Members have opportunities to participate in meaningful community service activities.					
Members have opportunities to identify and learn about community issues they care about in the club.					
Members develop leadership skills in the club.					
Members become active at the club level and beyond.					
Members are active learners through practical, hands-on activities in the club.					
Younger members are matched with mentors or older youth in the club.					
The club tailors its activities to meet the needs and interests of members.					
The club meets in a safe environment for learning and fun.					
Members can choose their level of involvement in club activities.					
Members trust club advisors.					
The club provides for many ways to experience a sense of success.					
All members are valued.					
Club advisors know how to deal with the unexpected and are flexible.					
Club advisors care about the members.					

Adapted and written by Patty House, OSU Extension Clark County, 4-H Youth Development Extension Educator for Clark County 4-H Advisor Handbook, P. House and B. Cripe, 1/04, Updated 1/05 & 1/06.

Sources:

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- Critical Elements and Practices for 4-H, An Overview and Summary, (2/2000), Astroth, Kirk, State 4-H Leader, Montana State University.
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