

WELCOME TO
THE WORLD OF
4-H 
BASICS FOR NEW LEADERS

Starting a 4-H Club or Group

Key ideas

- How to recruit 4-H members and how many should we have?
- How can I enroll my group as a 4-H club?
- What about project materials?
- Are there dues for 4-H members?
- What about insurance?
- Where will our club meet?
- How often will our club meet?

These are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about starting a 4-H club. As you review this material, make note of your ideas and questions. Highlight information you find especially useful.

Recruiting 4-H members and additional adult leaders

First of all, how many members? 4-H clubs can have as few as two or three members or as many as the leader feels can be included effectively in the group. Some suggest that 6 to 10 members per adult leader is an optimum number. However, it depends on the number and variety of projects in your club. It also depends on how many other leaders will be working with you. Limit your first group to a number with which you and your co-leaders feel comfortable!

Recruiting members is seldom hard to do. Contact your county Extension office—they usually have names of people who want to join a club in your area. Your Extension staff may have a recruiting program or other ideas for recruiting new club members.

You may find it helpful to recruit other adults to help with club leadership. Interested parents, 4-H alumni, or friends often are willing to help. This gives the leader much-needed assistance and provides continuity for club meetings. An older and experienced teen member can help to teach younger members and lead activities.

When recruiting, we must be certain our programs are available to all people equally without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, disability, and disabled veteran or Vietnam-era veteran status.

How can I enroll my group as a 4-H club?

Your county Extension office has the necessary enrollment forms for you to complete and submit to the office. Enrollment is necessary for participation in 4-H.

We use a computer-based enrollment system, which means the forms must be filled out completely and accurately. Be sure to check the codes that accompany the form. The 4-H year starts each fall on October 1 and runs through September 30. All 4-H members must reenroll every year. Each county has a due date for enrollments. It's a good idea to enroll early so you and your members stay continually on the mailing list and receive notices of all events and activities. Most counties also have a deadline for enrollment additions and changes in order to be eligible to participate in state and county fairs and other activities.

After your club enrollment form has been submitted, check with your county Extension office to see whether member recognition items are available.



What about project materials?

Each county office has copy of the Arizona Publication catalog. This is a complete guide to Arizona's 4-H Youth Development Programs and includes project and materials lists for the project areas: animal science, home economics, horticulture, natural resources, expressive arts, science and tech, and CloverKids. This publication lists all materials available in each area for leaders and members. If you haven't received the catalog, please ask for one or find it on-line at: <http://ag.arizona.edu/4h>.

This publication includes sections that identify general resources and materials about leadership and citizenship.

You'll find the project leader's guide to be particularly helpful, since it contains not only information about the project, but also many helpful ideas on teaching methods and learning activities.

The U of A Extension Service has a cost-recovery program for all publications, including 4-H materials.

Are there dues for 4-H members?

Arizona 4-H members do have a program development fee to pay. In addition, some clubs may decide to pay for the cost of supplies by assessing a small fee per member or by working together on a fundraising project.

If you and your club choose to hold a fundraising project, be sure to check

with your county Extension staff about fundraising guidelines and policies in your county. They also have ideas about activities that have been successful fundraisers in your area.

What about insurance?

When volunteers have been accepted and duly appointed in the 4-H program, they automatically have liability insurance coverage through the U of A when leading a 4-H group or activity. Check with your county Extension office for details on how the program works.

Accident insurance is not automatic. If you choose, your 4-H club can apply for accident insurance. A number of companies offer accident insurance plans for youth groups. Annual premiums usually are low cost (e.g., \$1 per member or \$2 per motorcycle or horse club member). This insurance covers your 4-H members (leaders also may be covered) from the time you leave home until you return home from any 4-H activity. Insurance also is available for special activities or events on a per-day basis. You can obtain forms for each of these plans at your county Extension office. The 4-H leader must complete and send the forms directly to the insurance company.

Some counties may include the \$1 or \$2-per-member insurance fee in a participation or project service fee assessed to cover costs for publications and/or activities. Then they submit accident coverage for all members in the county. Check with your county for their recommendation on handling accident insurance for members.



Where will our club meet?

Where your club meets probably will be determined by the number and location of members. It may be easiest for the club to meet at the leader's home (or it may be the only available location). Many clubs rotate meetings from one member's home to another; each family then has an opportunity to host a meeting. Other meeting places could be public school buildings, churches, fairgrounds, etc. Many schools, community facilities, and other groups are willing to let their facilities be used for 4-H activities.

How often will our club meet?

There are several possibilities in choosing a day and time for club meetings, such as:

- Once a week, after school (this works well for elementary-age members)
- Once every 2 weeks, after school, or on a week night
- Once a month, on a week night
- Once a month, on a Saturday or Sunday (sometimes this works best for clubs when members have a wide age span)
- Other variations, limited only by the needs of your club members

Counties may recommend a specific or minimum number of club meetings per year. Check with your county Extension staff for any requirements they have for number of meetings or member attendance. This provides continuity for the club as well as time for project development and accomplishment of individual and club goals.

Some projects can be completed on a short-term or seasonal basis. Clubs can enroll at any time during the year. Some clubs enroll at the beginning of the year but may plan to meet later for a shorter period of time (e.g., for a 3- or 6-month time period).

If you have further questions or concerns, contact your county Extension staff or another volunteer. They all want to help you succeed.



Action steps

- With the other leaders, develop your member recruitment plan.
- Decide on the leader and member materials you will need to order.
- Decide how potential club and/or project costs will be handled.
- Meet with members, parents, and other leaders to discuss where the club will meet and how often.
- Talk with your county Extension staff about insurance coverage.
- Attend scheduled leader training(s), as appropriate.

Reference materials

Check with your county Extension office.

4-H enrollment form

Insurance information material

The Arizona 4-H Publication Catalog.

Contacting your county Extension office

To locate an address and phone number, look in your local telephone directory. It may be listed in any number of ways in the white pages or in one of the special sections. For example, it might be listed as: 4-H; University of Arizona Extension Service; (county name) Extension Service.

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