

Participation in a "project" or "activity" allows youth to have necessary developmental experiences.

Children ages 5 through 19 also need to develop a sense of identity. They are not faced only with the task of discovering who they are but also with discovering who they can become; and the creating, sharing, exhibiting, and judging of these projects or activity is therefore one of the most meaningful parts of 4-H. Projects and activities can provide many of the necessary experiences needed by children and adolescents to develop in positive and healthy ways.

When the judge is successful, the evaluation of a project or activity is for the 4-H member a most positive and exciting part of the total 4-H experience. However, when judging is technically correct for subject but inappropriate in terms of youth development, it can be harmful to the 4-H member. Consequently, the judge's role, the leader's role, the parent's role, and the member's understanding of a judging philosophy is essential.

The project or activity is not an end in itself, nor does it illustrate all the learning that takes place; it displays a portion of what the child is capable of doing, and it shows what the 4-H member has accomplished and created. While this is important as part of a youth's development, the total development of the 4-H member is more important than the completion of the project/activity.

Message to the Judges

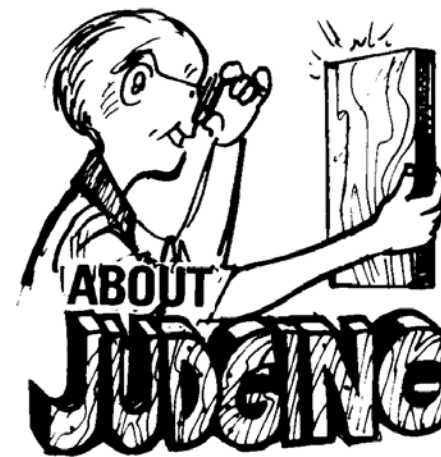
Judges can contribute significantly to the growth and the development of 4-H members through the exhibit and judging process. The judge serves as a representative of the 4-H program and of the outside world. The judge is the link between the 4-H project/activity the 4-H member, and a standard of performance.

The information listed above and the 12 points that follow will help judges appropriately complete their role in the 4-H program and uphold the purpose and value of 4-H and 4-H project/activity work.

1. Interact with the child whenever possible and discuss your observations and your judging philosophy. Discuss the standards you are using, the rationale for your standards, and the relation the standard you are using has to real life participation. Explain the value (weight) you are placing on various aspects of project/activity. Explain why some parts of the display are more important than other parts/aspects.
2. Youth development is the purpose of project/activity work.
3. Note achievement and success of the child's investment no matter how small. Comment that the 4-H member has completed the project/activity and taken the risk to show you their work.
4. Judge the exhibit, the child's behavior/performance -- not the child.
5. Be familiar with the total 4-H project/activity; goals, purposes, objectives, activities, and materials.
6. Be familiar with the guidelines established for the exhibit by the county and the state 4-H program area.
7. Develop and use standards regarding the exhibit, and compare the exhibit to the standards for judging. Avoid personal preferences. Use standards that are meaningful in reference to a typical home, farm, or work setting.
8. Evaluate the efforts of the 4-H member by recognizing stronger points/abilities demonstrated by the 4-H member as well as weaker points/abilities. Help the 4-H member to realize his/her opportunity to grow through the project/activity participation.
9. Judge the exhibit as an illustration of a 4-H member's achievements toward project/activity goals and objectives. Based on county rules, a judge may want to discuss with a 4-H member his/her understanding of the project/activity

goals, objectives, activities, and exhibit development.

10. Recognize the developmental level of the different ages of children. Comment on the achievements and successes of the child, taking in to account the developmental ability of a young person at a certain age.
11. Judging essentials:
 - a. a standard score card,
 - b. positive, constructive, and relevant written comments,
 - c. whenever possible, use conference judging; discuss the exhibit with the 4-H member.
12. Four important words in judging philosophy:
 - a. FAIR,
 - b. FIRM,
 - c. FRIENDLY,
 - d. CONSISTENT.



Message to the 4-H Leader and Parent:

4-H is intended to be a positive learning experience. It is through 4-H that young people and adults can grow and develop into productive and contributing members of our communities. It is through relationships and dialogue with adults and older youth that 4-H members have the best opportunity to understand the value of 4-H and the role of 4-H projects and activities. Adults help young people interpret the judging experience in relevant and meaningful ways. Evaluation of work should be a positive experience, designed to help the 4-H member improve and grow.

Interpretation and dialogue help 4-H members realize that the 4-H exhibit is not an end in itself and that it does not represent all that the 4-H member learned. The 4-H project/activity exhibit is one part of 4-H and part of the total learning experience. The exhibit is only one measure of success and achievement. Adults can help the young person experience self-recognition, self-satisfaction, and a feeling of success from the learning and completing of the project.

The following suggestions help in discussing 4-H projects/activities and the process of judging with young people.

1. Help young people understand the purpose of judging:
 - a. by evaluating a sample of the 4-H member's work,
 - b. by helping members see progress he/she has made,
 - c. by helping members improve their skills.
2. Help a 4-H member set realistic goals based on age, available resources, and time.
3. Share your thinking and hopes, but be careful not to impose adult goals on 4-H members. A person's goals should be his/her own.
4. Help the 4-H member recognize good work. Point out what you believe is good work; explain why you think so.

5. Provide constructive criticism/feedback, based on experience, standards and guidelines -- appropriate to the subject of the project and the age of the member.
6. Be familiar with the guidelines or criteria of the 4-H project/activity at both the county and the state level.
7. Be a coach and mentor. Help the young person recognize his/her accomplishments. Encourage 4-H members to do the work themselves to the best of their ability.
8. Recognize that there is more than one way to complete a 4-H project/activity. Creativity is a valuable personal ability; encourage creativity in completing 4-H projects/activities.
9. Help the 4-H member realize that the judge's comments can be very helpful or detrimental. These comments should be based on standards even though people view things differently.
10. In competitive events, avoid over-emphasis on the winner. Help the 4-H member accept the results of the competition and realize that everyone is a winner through his/her own accomplishments and efforts.



Message to the 4-H member:

As a 4-H member you are a special and unique individual. Each 4-H member is responsible for his/her own actions and attitudes. Each 4-H member can learn from the judging experience. It is intended to give guidance for personal growth and to provide opportunities for improving one's skills and abilities. It is up to the 4-H members to learn from the judging experience; a parent, leader, or judge cannot learn for the 4-H member. A judging experience should help a 4-H member learn to evaluate his/her own work.

An exhibit does not measure or illustrate all that a 4-H member achieved, but it is an example of what has been accomplished. Keep in mind the following points.

1. Accept constructive feedback: learn from it. Model to others the value of gathering information which can be used to improve skills and abilities.
2. A judge's comments are meant to be helpful even though the judge was given the responsibility to critique the exhibits.
3. Abilities are often determined by age and the experiences that have contributed to the ability to achieve and exhibit accomplishments.
4. Realize that people occasionally make mistakes and are entitled to your positive respect.
5. Demonstrate good sportsmanship. Show positive appreciation and regard for the achievements of those whose projects/performances placed higher than yours. Be proud of your accomplishments and your achievements.
6. Judging is hard work, maybe even harder than completing the project/activity. It is only because the judges believe in youth, 4-H members, and the 4-H opportunity that they agree to judge and provide comments that are meant to help you, the 4-H member, have a positive chance to grow through the 4-H program. Understand that they are making an investment in you. Appreciate their efforts.

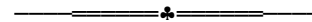


Summary:

Judging is a significant part of many 4-H experiences. It is intended to be a positive part of learning for the 4-H member and others. It reinforces learning when applied positively; but if it becomes a search for demerits, judging can be destructive of self-esteem, causing a loss of interest in the program and in 4-H. It can inhibit creativity and learning. The attitude we have toward judging is critical to the value of judging as a positive part of the 4-H program. When evaluating the process of judging, the most important criteria for its use is the growth and development of the 4-H member and the new skills, understanding, and abilities that they have gained.

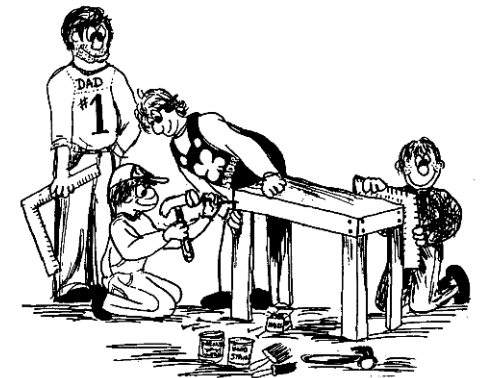
Judging a 4-H exhibit or display brings attention to only part of the total 4-H learning process and opportunity. It is important to focus on the total 4-H program by helping the 4-H participants recognize the many facets of the program. Youth and adults gain through the many accomplishments and achievements that occur throughout the total 4-H program and year.

Adapted by Deborah K. Moellendorf, 4-H Youth Development Agent, Lincoln County from: [4H567 Judging 4-H Projects](#); Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service, 1992.



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Judging 4-H Projects and Activities



The Mission of Lincoln County 4-H is: "To provide opportunities for young people to develop values, skills and behaviors needed to become responsible citizens and community leaders."