



OHIO 4-H CLUB ADVISOR'S GUIDE



Working With Officers and Committees

Elected officers are an important part of the leadership team in the local 4-H club. Being an officer helps members develop leadership skills as they perform the duties required of that office.

Club officers often do not realize just how important they are to their 4-H program. Many feel that their responsibilities as officers consist solely of doing what the job description says — presiding at meetings, taking notes, reporting the amount in the treasury, announcing the program, and so forth. But there is so much more potential here!

If 4-H clubs are to remain viable, we need to train our officers to work together as a team to improve the quality of club meetings. Moreover, they need help to see that their role as officers can be so much more than following parliamentary procedure. As adults, we need to help our officers understand that the success or failure of the 4-H year depends on them and how well they work together to address the needs of the membership and the organization.

Allowing 4-H groups to elect their own officers serves several purposes:

- all members learn about and participate in elections.
- those elected learn to be responsible to their group, learn leadership skills and parliamentary procedure.
- members feel ownership in their club meetings.

4-H club officers are usually elected each year near the beginning of the 4-H club's program year. **Before elections take place, an advisor or junior leader should do the following: 1) explain the duties of each office; 2) Discuss the need to elect members for their ability rather than for their popularity; and 3) Discuss the procedures to be followed in the election.**

One of the 4-H advisors or an older junior leader of the club should be responsible to help the officers carry out their responsibilities after elections.

The following 4-H officers are usually elected in each club:

President — Presides at all meetings. Manages the business of the club meeting. Appoints the committees. Helps keep order during the meeting.

Vice President — Takes charge of meeting in absence of president. Serves as the coordinator of all committees. Responsible for program portion of club meeting.

Secretary — Keeps written minutes of all meetings in the Secretary's 4-H Record Book. Keeps record of attendance of all members.

Treasurer — Takes care of all club funds. Keeps accurate record of club funds in the Treasurer's Record Book.

Reporter — Writes interesting and accurate reports of club meetings and special club activities, and sends reports to local newspaper. Helps keep local people informed of 4-H activities.

Recreation Chairman — Plans and conducts recreational activities. Involves other members in helping lead recreational activities.

Health and/or Safety Leaders — Helps members understand health and safety principles. Arranges for educational programs on health and safety.

A club may elect additional officers. Some clubs, for example, elect an energy officer, an historian, etc. In some clubs the offices of secretary and treasurer may be combined into one office. The size of the club and/or the age of the members will probably help determine the number and kinds of officers to be elected. One recurring problem in clubs with a mixture of age groups is the tendency to elect the youngest members in the club to three of the most difficult jobs — Recreation, Health and/or Safety. You may want to elect both an older and a younger member to these offices. This can help meet the needs and interests of the different age groups. Large clubs should consider electing two sets of officers — seniors and juniors. The juniors can learn as the year goes along, and they should then be allowed to conduct at least one meeting.

Every member of the club should have some responsibility for club operation. All should serve on a standing committee and most on special appointed committees. This helps the members develop a feeling that they all are members of a team.

Because one of the goals of 4-H is to develop leadership skills, it is a good idea to pass jobs around so members gain different experiences. This will usually mean that the same member does not hold the same office in successive years. A variety of experiences will help the member grow in leadership and develop new skills.

Election of Officers

How well do members know one another? Is the club just getting started? Are there several new members? How large is the club? The answer to these questions and others can help decide how and when officers are elected.

Time is needed for members to become acquainted with potential officers. It may be best to elect officers at the second or third meeting of the year when members have had more of a chance to get to know each other. Clubs that meet on a year around basis can elect officers at any time of the year. There are many acceptable ways to elect officers. The three discussed here are the most common:

1. The first method, often used in larger, continuing clubs, uses a nominating committee. This committee of three to five persons is usually appointed by the retiring president. The committee meets with the organization advisor prior to the club meeting when the election of officers is to take place. Two persons are usually nominated for each office.

Each prospective officer is asked if he/she will serve prior to completing the slate of officers. The slate is then presented at the club meeting as a committee report. If a nominating committee is used, it is always in order to nominate others from the floor.

2. A variation of the nominating committee method is to have members at one meeting sign up for the offices for which they would like to be elected. At the next meeting, these members then give a short statement as to why they would like the office. The election follows.

3. The third method of electing officers is by nomination from the floor. In this method, the past president (or in a new club the organization advisor) calls for nominations from the floor for president. After nominations are closed for president, the nominees are voted on prior to receiving nominations for vice president. Voting should be by secret ballot as members write the name of their choice on a slip of paper. One by one, each office is filled by members elected by the majority of votes cast.

The same voting procedure should be followed with the other methods. Any club member defeated for one office can be nominated for another office from the floor. This ensures that good officer material defeated for one office can be nominated for another.

As soon as the president is elected, that person can take over the duties of the office and conduct the rest of the meeting including the election of the other officers. An alternative is for the past officers to be responsible until the new officers are officially installed.

Installation of Officers

An installation ceremony is one way to stress the importance of officers and their contributions to the club. Also, it will inform the club members of the officer roles. Two brochures on installation ceremonies are available from the county Extension office: Installation Ceremony for 4-H Club Officers I (Hands Theme); and Installation Ceremony for 4-H Club Officers II (Candlelighting Theme). Other installation ceremony ideas are available. Often the retiring officers with the help of a leader or parent can prepare an effective, original ceremony. Being chosen as a 4-H club officer is an honor which deserves recognition. Recognition brings pride to the office.

Officer Training

After officers are elected, they will need training and continuing support. The officers and the advisors make up the Executive Committee of the club. The committee will need to meet, plan and get training soon after new officers are elected. The president needs to learn how to conduct a meeting, the secretary needs to know about the Secretary's Record Book, etc.

The organization leader working with the officers can provide training for the officers by doing the following:

1. Give each officer the appropriate guidesheet and review it with that person.
2. Have each officer participate in a countywide 4-H Officers and Advisors Conference.

3. Explain the club's records and how they are kept.

4. Review and discuss Conducting Club Meetings on pages 10-12 of the Green Pages - 4-H Advisors Program Book.

5. Discuss parliamentary procedure, what it is and why it is used. The slide/tape set, Parliamentary Procedure for 4-H Clubs, and the 4-H Presidents Book are good resources.

6. Allow officers to practice conducting and participating in a mock club meeting. This will help develop understanding and make them feel more at ease during the actual club meeting.

7. Evaluate previous year's program and develop an agenda for the current year's club program.

8. Plan an agenda for the next club meeting.

9. Use the Miracle Worker exercise on the back of this pamphlet. This exercise can help "stretch" the leadership potential of officers.

10. Give each officer guidance as needed throughout the year, including the following:

a. Work with officers on agenda items before each meeting. This 10 to 15 minute meeting will help officers better prepare for the meeting and will help them understand the importance of planning.

b. Help officers see ways of including all members so they feel needed (include all members on committees, call on different members at the meetings, get feedback from all age groups).

c. Give encouragement, praise, recognition and help when appropriate.

4-H Club Committees

Committees can help the 4-H club function effectively. Committees also let everyone get involved. Committee membership need not be limited to club members. Parents and club advisors also can be appointed to help plan and supervise various club activities. Some individuals who will not accept responsibility alone may be willing to work with others on a committee. Serving on a committee can give members a chance to "grow into" responsibility, which will help them develop leadership skills.

Committees are appointed by the president with assistance of the 4-H advisor. Committee chairs may be named by the president or by the committee. **The vice president coordinates the work of all committees.**

Standing committees are appointed each year and serve for the entire year. **All members should serve on at least one standing committee each year.** Examples include the following:

a. **Program Committee** — plans the program for the year, including the program for each meeting. After the plans are approved by the club members, they are written in the Secretary's Record Book. They also should be shared with each family in the club and with the county Extension office. The vice president may serve as chair of this committee.

b. **Recreation Committee** — plans recreation for each club meeting and social activities for the club. The recreation leader serves as chair.

c. **Membership Committee** — makes plans to enroll new members in the club. Recruitment fliers are available from the county Extension office. Talk with prospective members and their parents. Help new members get acquainted in the club and participate in club programs.

d. Other standing committees may include health, safety, fund raising, community service, social, etc.

Special committees are appointed to study problems and recommend solutions. Some special committees might be for club tours, transportation, window display, parent appreciation programs, fair booth, etc.

Each committee may have an adult member. This may be a junior leader, advisor, or a parent. Adults should understand that their role is as an advisor to the group. The committee makes recommendations and plans.

Tips for Better Club Meetings

Consider the following as you plan for good club meetings:

1. **Age of the Members** — The attention span of young members is only 15 to 20 minutes. They will get lost in long rambling discussions. Use a committee to plan for specifics like tours, parents meetings, etc. Limit the business meetings to business only. Demonstrations and reports may fit better in the project work or educational part of the meeting.

2. **Age or Experience of Officers** — A young president may need someone to sit beside them to help out for several meetings. The same applies to other young officers. An older member, parent or advisor can be a great help here.

3. **Room Arrangement** — Keep the group together. A circle is great if the club is small. Members off in a corner cannot really feel a part of the meeting.

4. **Recruit Experienced Members to Help the Meeting Go Well** — “Monkey-see, monkey-do” is an appropriate example. If older members pay attention and “want” a good meeting, the younger members will react accordingly. If business meetings have been a problem, you may need an open and frank discussion with the older members on how they would improve the meetings.

5. **Use Parliamentary Procedure** — Proper use of the basics can assure full participation of all members (i.e. - must be recognized by the president to speak, no one else speaks while someone else is recognized, discuss the item of business before receiving a motion — this saves the time of dropping a motion or amending it). Borrow the slide set, “Parliamentary Procedure for 4-H Clubs,” from your county Extension office. Your club can get good ideas from this. Above all, keep it simple.

6. **Meet with Officers** — Meet 15 minutes before the meeting starts to review the agenda. This helps the officers start thinking about what needs to be done.

7. **Consider the “Timing” of the Business Meeting** (or a guest speaker, for that matter) — If the members have been active, laughing and having fun with recreation, it may take 15 minutes for the adrenaline to stop running. Some “slow-down” activity, like project work, may be necessary before they can give the meeting or speaker the attention deserved.

8. **Planned Programs** — Programs should be planned several months in advance.

9. **Get All Members Involved** — Every member should be on the program sometime during the year. If there are inactive members, ask for their opinions during the meetings and find out their interests. Get them involved in special club projects.

Remember: We are training tomorrow’s leaders. A few moments devoted to pre-planning the meeting can reap great benefits. A good business meeting does not just happen — it is planned.

Helping Officers See Beyond

Getting your 4-H officers to feel that they have an obligation that goes well beyond filling an office may be difficult, but the following exercise has proved successful with young people.

At your next training session or at a special officer get-together, distribute the list of “Miracle Workers” to each officer. Let them read through the descriptions of these 15 “experts.” When they have finished, explain to them that they can take advantage of the talents of only five miracle workers to assist them in the coming year. Whose “gifts” would they most like to receive? Give them some time to re-read the choices and ask them to circle the number before their five top choices.

Next, have your officers individually select their “second string.” Which five of the remaining 10 miracle workers would they like to have on their side? Ask each to put a square around the number preceding the miracle workers chosen for this backup team.

Whether you are working with only one set of club officers or with officers from several clubs, at this point encourage each set of officers to discuss the top five miracle workers chosen by the set. Why did each person select that particular top five? Why were the others less desirable? Instruct them to come to some sort of agreement about the top five miracle workers they feel they want as a group. If you have several groups, have them share out loud their choice of the final five with others.

As a facilitator, explore the reasons for their choices. Their selection showed what patterns? Is there anything that links together the top five choices? Are there things that link the five least requested miracle workers? What do the final top five choices suggest about problems in the club? Where do the officers feel they need the most help?

Encourage active discussion, which this exercise usually generates anyway. To help your officers process this exercise, ask them what they are doing now or plan to do in the future to achieve what their top five miracle workers could do for the club. How can they become miracle workers?

Finally, have your officers devise a plan to address at least two of the problems they identified. Put this plan down on paper and outline some steps to meet the objectives. Make sure everyone gets a copy, including you. Encourage your officers to follow through. They will become more than office holders; they will become problem solvers. A working precedent will be established.

The Miracle Workers

A group of 15 experts, considered miracle workers by those who have used their services, have agreed to provide these services for you free of charge. It is up to you to decide which of these people you need most.

1. Dr. Seymour Prospects — a noted college professor, he can help you recruit as many new 4-H members as you want.

2. "Pop" Larity - he guarantees that you will have the friends you want now and in the future, ensuring that you soon will be president.

3. Dr. Betty Can — she can recruit new adult community club advisors for you at any time, especially ones who are enthusiastic and hard working.

4. Rocky Fellas — can bring wealth to your 4-H club, with guaranteed schemes for earning thousands within weeks.

5. Patty Participation — a noted lecturer in motivational theory, she can increase parent involvement in all club activities, including club meetings.

6. Baron VonBarrons — he brings to your club his organizational talents and ensures that all your 4-H club meetings are orderly, organized and efficient.

7. Mrs. Lotta Pep — she can guarantee that all your club meetings and activities will be exciting and fun filled.

8. Dr. Yes — her special training will ensure that whenever you ask someone to help, they will agree.

9. "Red" Ribbons — although he is rather old, he still has what it takes to train all club members in the ins-and-outs of doing well at the county fair.

10. Dr. Pepper — his talents in game theory have earned him the nickname of "Dr. Phun." His recreation activities will improve your club meetings.

11. Lord Roberts — his expertise in parliamentary procedure ensures that you will be able to master every term and every motion.

12. Mrs. Civic Sense — she has a wide range of ideas and resources for community service projects for your 4-H club.

13. Dr. Lea Der — an expert with project advisors, will show you how to recruit all the project advisors you will ever need for your club.

14. "Rowdy" Yates — his personal experience as a troublesome youngster make even more valuable his advice on ways to control disruptive members.

15. Ms. Lettuce B. Prompt — an expert in scheduling techniques, she can show you how to ensure that 4-H members arrive for events on time.

This guide was compiled by Allen L. Ulrich, Extension 4-H Specialist and Jill Nolan, County Extension Agent, 4-H.

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