

# Making the Best 4-H Clubs Better – Virtually

## Intended Audience

- 4-H Club Members

## Lesson Objectives

Club members and parents will:

- Understand the importance of creating a welcoming environment for new members and families.
- Establish member-mentor dynamic duos to encourage new members to become actively involved in the club.
- Increase sense of belonging for new and returning members and families.

**Time:** 20 minutes

## Equipment and supplies

- Pencils
- Resource:
  - “4-H DD’s” (Dynamic Duos)
- Handout:
  - “4-H Dynamic Duos Partner Profile Questionnaire”
- Small welcome gift for new members (pencil, candy, etc.)
- Assign pairs
- Gather member addresses

## Members + Mentors = Retention

### BACKGROUND

Most years new faces from new families join your club. It can be an overwhelming experience to join 4-H—new vocabulary, new expectations, new culture. Because of these barriers, fewer than 50% of all first year 4-H members continue into a second year of 4-H. When asked, many of these youth say that they didn’t feel welcome, couldn’t understand what they were supposed to do, or didn’t know anyone at the meetings.

As advisors and experienced club members, we can create a welcoming environment in our club and help new(er) members and families get and stay involved. Keeping our current members is called retention.

One retention strategy used successfully in some clubs around the country is matching new members with older, more experienced member mentors. These mentors look after their assigned partners, checking in with them outside of meetings, contacting them if or when they miss a meeting, helping them understand how the meetings work, and helping them with their projects as needed. Knowing someone cares is often all it takes to get a member successfully through his/her first year and happily into a second one. Why not try matching new members with mentors in your club?

Prior to the meeting, be sure to review the “4-H DD’s (Dynamic Duos)” resource material. For the activity to be most effective, every member will need to be paired with someone else. Plan ahead to create these dynamic duos in your club.

\*\*If necessary, trios are also okay.

### WHAT TO DO

**Activity:** 4-H DD’s (Dynamic Duos)

1. Assign experienced member with a younger, less-experienced member. Mail/email each interviewer the Partner Profile Questionnaire.



## Sources

- Modified from Linda Kustka, Professor Emeritus, Department of Youth Development, UW-Extension.
- Trisha Day and Greg Lampe, “4-H DD’s (Dynamic Duos)” in “Communication Activities for 4-H Clubs and Other Youth Groups,” COMMO7, 4-H Youth Development Building Bridges Curriculum, Department of 4-H Youth Development, UW Extension.

## Prepared By

Kate Wells,  
Extension Educator  
4-H Youth Development  
OSU Extension Ross County  
[wells.1614@osu.edu](mailto:wells.1614@osu.edu)

*We are indebted to the original author of the previous version of this lesson plan, Carolyn Belczyk*

## Reviewed by:

4-H Youth Development professionals in an 11-county region in Southern Ohio  
January 2021

## What To Do - Continued

2. Duos take turns interviewing one another and take notes about the responses. Interviews should not take more than 5-10 minutes. Duos can meet virtually via Facebook messenger, Skype, Facetime, or other means to respond to questions before the meeting or could meet in break out rooms during the meeting.
3. During the virtual club meeting, have duos take turns introducing their partners to the club by sharing one fact from their partner’s question responses. For example, Sally will share Susie’s responses and Susie will share Sally’s responses.
4. Ask mentors, the experienced member, to give their partner, the new member, a reminder call/text prior to the next meeting to check in and answer any questions they might have about upcoming events or expectations.

\*\*Optional to have mentors send a small welcoming gift to the new members.

## TALK IT OVER

### Reflect:

- How did getting to know your partner make you feel?
- How do you think it will help the club build a community?

### Apply:

- At future meetings, ask who remembered to call/text their partners before the meeting. Commend those that remembered! Encourage partners to share any questions that were asked/answered for the benefit of the group.
- Find ways for partners to work together on projects in the future—community service, demonstrations, leading an activity.
- Ask the group what kind of virtual get-acquainted activities should be tried in the future? Example. member two-truths and a lie, jeopardy, member bingo, etc.

## EVALUATION

Place the following link in the chat for attendees to use to complete the evaluation for the session  
[go.osu.edu/bestbettervirtual](https://go.osu.edu/bestbettervirtual) .