

Maryland 4-H brings the University of Maryland into the lives of children and families in their own communities.

Through volunteer-directed educational programs, 4-Hers:

- Practice decision making
- Acquire knowledge
- Accept responsibility
- Develop creative thinking
- Communicate
- Understand self
- Get along with others

Youth develop these life skills while having fun through learning in a selected project from three core subject areas:

- ♦ **Core I Animal Sciences**
- ♦ **Core II Environmental Sciences**
- ♦ **Core III Human Sciences**

The Project

The project is the foundation for learning. Projects are designed so individuals can progress at their own pace through learning experiences. With the guidance of parents, volunteers or teen leaders, knowledge is applied to practical life experiences.

To complete a project, a member:

- Develops a plan of action or sets goals in the project record. (optional)
- Completes the “hands on” learning activities.
- Demonstrates, talks or presents reasons about knowledge or skills learned.
- Evaluates the project through displays, exhibits or competitive events.
- Records knowledge, skills, experiences, leadership and citizenship in the project record.

- Completes the record sheet and turns it into the county 4-H office.

Selecting the Project

Projects are real-life experiences that help 4-Hers learn to make sound decisions. Projects put the hands and mind to work. Most projects have been designed with several levels so that a member may advance to more difficult and challenging experiences.

The Maryland 4-H project year runs from January 1 through December 31. Projects are selected in the early fall by 4-H members. Younger members should limit their projects to just one or two. Better to finish only a few projects and experience a sense of satisfaction than to bite off more than one can reasonably finish. Older, experienced members may be able to do several different ones, including those that are more difficult.

Here are a few suggestions to help guide members and families as they decide which project each child might take:

- 1. Interest of child** – Try to determine if the member will be interested in the project. Of course, some times the youngster may not know if he or she will like a project until it is tried. Start members in projects that they know they will like, and build on successful experiences.
- 2. Age Appropriate** – Make sure the project is in keeping with the age and ability (physical, mental, and emotional) of the member.

3. Commitment – Can the member and the family commit to the time involved? During what season of the year is most of the activity likely to occur?

4. Parental Approval – Is the project acceptable to you as parents and does it fit with the family situation?

5. Financial Support – Be certain to discuss cost of the project. How will the initial costs be paid for? Is there adequate space and equipment available to carry out the project? If the money has to be borrowed, what plans can you make to turn this into a learning experience for the 4-H member?

6. Responsibility – Does the project have an opportunity for ownership and management responsibilities? Does the 4-H member understand the commitment they must make to complete the project? Developing a sense of responsibility for choices is one of the most important life skills 4-H can teach.

7. Directed or Cooperative Learning

Are there leaders to help with the project in the club, or are the parents willing to help the member with the project? In many cases, youngsters will experience a greater sense of satisfaction if they enroll in projects for which there are previously identified leaders and who hold group meetings and workshops. Working in groups helps young people learn to get along with others and develops an inquiring mind.

Help Your 4-Her

Ideally, a 4-H member should have the interest and support of at least one parent or other caring adult. If you are wondering just how you can help in 4-H, here are some suggestions:

- ♦ Advise your child in the wise selection of 4-H projects
- ♦ Show your interest and enthusiasm for the projects selected. Learn what is required of the 4-Hers in each project that they select.
- ♦ Help guide your youngster with the project, but don't do the job for him or her.
- ♦ When a project is started, see that it is completed satisfactorily. Projects should be suited to the ability of your child.
- ♦ Attend club meetings and other club functions.
- ♦ Actively share your skills with other members of the 4-H club.
- ♦ Keep informed on 4-H information that comes to members of your family.
- ♦ Offer your services to assist the local 4-H club leader.
- ♦ If the need arises, help find a local leader for the club in your community. Always support the leader selected. There is probably a place for you to serve in some leadership capacity; perhaps as a project leader in a field which interests you. Become an appointed UME volunteer and share your talents and skills with 4-H youth. It is a great opportunity for adults to learn new things, too.