



# South Dakota 4-H

## Club Officer Guide

Adapted by Sara Koepke, SDSU Extension 4-H Youth Program Advisor

Photo courtesy of the National 4-H Council.

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### What Is Leadership?

#### Leadership is...

... the ability to influence the thinking and actions of people. Good leadership helps others in the group to become the best they can be and it inspires everyone to want to “make the best better.” It requires willingness to tackle a new job and persistence to see it through.

#### Characteristics of a Good Leader

One of the greatest challenges in learning to be a successful leader is learning to understand yourself and to know as much as possible about the others in your group.

#### Recognize Ability:

You may think Jimmy John is the only person in the club who has musical ability, but give everyone a chance. Or, you might assume that Wally Wilson is of no use except as a troublemaker, but maybe it's you that has it all wrong. If you find what a person is good at or interested in, you will find he or she has some ability that will help the club. Help develop members' talents. Remember that everyone is important and every person you talk to is somebody.

#### Grow in wisdom:

Leadership is the greatest opportunity for learning you will ever experience. So many things you think you know well enough now will have to be known much better when you're leading others. What you learn about people in working with them is a lesson that will help you all of your life. Enhance your wisdom through training, meetings and sharing experiences with others. Remember that you won't always know the answers; when you don't, be sure to admit it, but strive to find the answer until it is found.

#### Work with Others:

As a leader you will work with many people. However, leadership doesn't mean bossing people around, nor does it mean doing everything for them. Rather, it means guiding people into making their own decisions and doing things for themselves. Sometimes you will feel you could do a task better and more easily by yourself than by helping others to do it for themselves. Don't give in to temptation! Instead, explain clearly and answer questions then let the members do the rest.

#### Cooperate:

Youth leaders and adult leaders must cooperate in all aspects of 4-H. From planning your meetings to organizing fundraisers, cooperation is key. Parents are an important piece of the puzzle when working with 4-H'ers. You must be willing to compromise with your schedule and activities in order to get members to attend. In addition to member's families, be sure to cooperate with organizations in your town or community. They are more willing to help your club's cause if you and your members are familiar to them. However, it is okay to not go along with everything in an attempt to be cooperative. Know when to present your own ideas and get the ball rolling yourself. Finding the balance is key.

#### Lend a Helping Hand:

Your 4-H'er's may need a little coaxing to gain courage every once in a while. Give them support by showing them how and telling them why. If a 4-H'er has learned a lesson from a mistake without feeling bad or discouraged about it, then you have fulfilled your responsibility. For example, offer your assistance to record a musically talented 4-H member for their 4-H project.

## Play:

Get in the game. When you are enthusiastic and fun, your attitude rubs off on others. As a leader, you must get to know your 4-H'ers. Recreation is a great opportunity to learn more about the members and let them learn more about you. This will make them feel more comfortable around you and they will be more enthusiastic about attending meetings and other activities.

## Tips for Being a Good Leader

- Be a team player.
- Be thoughtful of others.
- Be a good sport.
- Be reliable and responsible.
- Celebrate others' success.
- Be fair.
- Be helpful.
- Have fun with 4-H!

## Jobs For Everyone!

### Officers

Good officers are enthusiastic, tactful and friendly. They work to get each member of the club involved in plans and to give everyone a fair chance. They accept and respect each member and encourage everyone to contribute to the club.

They are proud of their jobs and always do their best. They get things done right and on time. In addition, they work with members, parents, and leaders to plan and carry out the club program. They understand their jobs and prepare themselves to do well.

To be successful, officers and committees must perform many duties. Some of those duties (or responsibilities) are listed below:

- Secure new members
- Organize the club
- Plan the program, month by month, that involves all members
- Arrange for a meeting place and its care
- Conduct and take part in all meetings
- Keep club records and submit them as required

- Show enthusiasm and interest in the club
- Help every 4-H'er find a place in the club and an opportunity to contribute
- Keep the community informed about the club
- Maintain contact with the local county Extension office
- Share leadership with many and give others the opportunity to develop their skills
- Be dependable

Each officer should work toward the following personal leadership goals:

- I know the duties and responsibilities of my office.
- I am willing to improve myself in order to be a better officer.
- I am friendly to all members of the club and include everyone in club meetings and activities.
- I willingly accept responsibilities assigned to me.
- I enjoy doing more work than what is required of me.
- I give credit to others for work well done.
- I am prompt in arriving at meetings.
- My appearance inspires confidence and respect.
- I am kind, tactful, and courteous, and use "please" and "thank you" when I should.
- I ask for suggestions and cooperation.
- I show appreciation to leaders and parents for their time, effort, and devotion to the club.

### Members

Members are important too. Without good members, the club will not run. Encourage them to take an active part. That means they speak up in meetings and make their ideas known. And they volunteer for jobs without having to be coaxed.

Every member should be on a committee or have another important job. That way, they will feel like they are really part of the club. Try to arrange the committee so that each member serves on the one that most

***"Enthusiasm is the key not only to the achievement of great things but to the accomplishment of anything that is worthwhile."***

**- Samuel Goldwyn**

interests him. Also, let each member do the job they do best. They'll be happiest if he can do something that really interests him and something he can do well.

Members also have an important part at meetings. They can make suggestions and come up with ideas that no one else may have thought of. You can encourage this by making the meeting friendly and positive. That means saying things like "I like Sue's idea, but maybe it would work better if we..." instead of something like "that's the wrong way."

And of course, members should attend all club meetings and activities if they possibly can. Help them feel that their attendance is really important to the success of the club.

- Be on time for meetings
- Don't talk to others when the meeting is in progress
- Put your hand up to address the chairperson
- Wait for recognition from the chairperson before speaking
- Make independent decisions when voting on motions.
- Accept the decision of the majority.
- Get involved!

#### 4-H Adults

##### **Note to all parents and leaders:**

Allow the members to be the sole decision makers and operators of the club. You are there to support or advise when requested by the members.

#### 4-H Leaders

##### **Responsibilities:**

- Be on time for meetings.
- General Leadership: Check the agenda or program before the meeting so you can organize your thoughts or prepare for any part of the meeting that you are responsible for.
- Pay close attention and cooperate with the requests of the chairperson.
- Do not talk while the meeting is in progress.
- Put your hand up to address the chairperson.
- Wait for recognition from the chairperson before speaking.
- Keep your discussion on topic and to the point.
- Accept the decision of the majority.
- Get involved in committees and projects as an advisor.

#### 4-H Parents

- Familiarize yourself with the objectives of 4-H and how it will benefit your child.
- Be aware of the opportunities available through the 4-H program and encourage your child's participation.
- Show genuine interest in what your child's project involves.
- Review project and Club materials or assist your child when required to complete their project.
- Attend 4-H Club meeting as a spectator with your child whenever possible.
- Encourage 4-H members to develop their decision making and leadership skills at 4-H meetings.
- Support the Club leaders in their efforts to have a successful, smooth operating club year.
- Volunteer for parts of the 4-H program you may be interested in or have a special ability for. Talk to the Club Leaders and be clear on what you contribute to the program.
- Attend 4-H club and regional events as a spectator with your child whenever possible.

#### Committees

Your club can have committees. The exact number would depend on how big the club is and what you want to do. Here are some ideas on how to organize committees:

##### **Programs**

This committee goes to work after the club has made its program plans for the year. Committee members find speakers on subjects the club wants to know about. Or they see if the county extension office has information. They may also ask a 4-H'er who has been to a special conference to talk to the club about it. Whatever they do, they check with the leader before the meeting to be sure the program is set.

##### **Membership**

Every live club is a growing one. The membership committee makes sure other youth know how to join the club. They try to reach everyone in the area. They get other members to help. The club could have its goal, "Each one Reach one."

##### **Recreation**

The recreation committee plans for some fun at each meeting. It may also suggest and plan special

activities- swimming parties, overnight camps, trail rides, etc.

### Community Service

This committee finds out what your club can do to make the community better. To get ideas, committee members talk with leaders, parents, neighbors, and local public service organizations. They then present their ideas to the club. Once the club decides on a project, the committee plans for work days, reports on how much has been done, and coordinates the club's efforts.

### Health and Safety

Some clubs plan a special health or safety activity during the year. This can be something like checking hearing and sight, fighting food fads, fighting air and water pollution, or learning about drugs or smoking, or learning about home fire drills, carbon monoxide problems, or safe use of pesticides. Committee members get ideas, investigate to see if help is available, and then make suggestions for the club to consider. After the club decides, they work out the program in detail.

### Special Events

The president can also appoint committees for special events, such as parent's night, the achievement banquet, a club tour, or a party.

## How To Delegate Tasks & Responsibilities To Committees

- President will appoint & assist with committees
- Committees are useful in accomplishing club business because they can:
  - o get more accomplished
  - o spread the work load out
  - o develop leadership within the other club members
- Make sure the committee knows its assignment
- A committee should always consist of more than one member
- Encourage younger members to be on a committee
- Don't always have the same ones on a committee
- Appoint a chairperson in a committee

### Meeting Success

A lot of meeting success depends on you. The rest depends on the attitudes of your members, parents,

and leaders, but you can do a lot to influence their attitudes. Do you have members that never talk? Or one that talks too much? Two parents whose side conversation is more interesting to them than the member's discussion? Do you ignore it?

### Simple Solutions:

**Talkative Member** - Don't embarrass them or use sarcasm, their input may be useful later on. The member may be trying to show off their knowledge, or are just being themselves. Interrupt them with something like:

- "That's an interesting point; now let's see what the group thinks of it."

In general, try to let the group take care of the member as much as possible.

**Argumentative Member** - Keep your own temper in check. The member may naturally be combative, or may be justifiably upset about something. You have a few options:

- Try to find merit in one of their points and then move on.
- If they make an obvious misstatement, turn it over to the group and let them turn it down.
- As a last resort, talk to them privately and try to find out if something else is bothering them or if there is something you can do to win their cooperation.

**Overly Helpful Member** - Thank them for volunteering but suggest others be put to work, question others, or use this member for summarizing.

**Insistent Member** - Try either of these strategies:

- Throw the member's view to the group and try to let them sway the opinion, or
- Explain that in the interest of time you are willing to discuss it later if they will accept the group viewpoint for the moment.

**Side Discussions** - Don't embarrass them. The discussion could be related to the subject, or it may be personal, but the bottom line is it distracts everyone from the meeting.

- Call one of the members involved in the discussion by name and ask an easy question, or
- Restate the last opinion or remark and ask their opinion.

**Inarticulate Member** - They need help expressing their thoughts. Don't say 'what you mean is...' Instead say something like:

- "Let me repeat that" and then put it in better language, or say
- "What I think you mean is... \_\_\_\_\_. Is that right?"

**Uninformed Member** - Don't say, "You're wrong." Instead, say something like:

- "That is one way of looking at it" or
- "I see your point, but can we reconcile that with the..."

**Rambling Member** - Try these steps:

- Smile and tell him his point is interesting.
- Then, in a friendly matter indicate that they are a bit off subject.
- When they stop for a breath you can also refocus attention by restating the relevant points and moving on.

**Clashing Members**- It can divide the group into factions.

- If possible, emphasize points of agreement and minimize points of disagreement.
- Draw attention to your objectives with a direct question to cut across their discussion.
- A neutral member being brought into the discussion can also be effective.
- Sometimes you just have to ask frankly that personalities be left out of it.

**Quiet Members**- They could be bored, indifferent, timid, insecure, or feeling superior. Your action must depend on what is motivating them.

- Ask for opinions to try and stimulate interest or draw them out.
- If they are the 'superior' type, ask for their view after indicating the respect held for this person's experience. (Be careful not to overdo this as the group will resent it.)
- Ask a provocative question to combat indifference.
- Compliment (be sincere) the timid or insecure person the first time they talk.

**Dealing with Adults**- Adults should be in a "support" role at Club meetings. The president should use the same rules for difficult members and adults in the meeting or at club functions. Take into consideration the following:

- Be professional.
- Use respect.
- Work together.
- Be positive.
- Keep lines of communication strong.
- Be patient- sometimes adults are slower to react with enthusiasm. Remember they have more experience and their thoughtful opinion is worth waiting for.
- Show respect for your leader's time and talents. Never commit them without asking first. It is polite to give your leader a chance to say no, even though you're sure they will say yes.
- Know your limits and accept help when needed.

A 4-H club is an excellent example of how a democratic system works in a group where youth – 4-H members – have a chance to learn about democratic principles and to practice leadership skills. The members of the club learn to have elections, present ideas, vote and help put ideas into action.

Being a club officer, you are giving leadership to help the club reach its goals. The experience will help you learn what it means to be a good citizen, accept responsibility and enjoy the rights of a citizen.

## References

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