

South Dakota 4-H Judging Basics



HEAD



HEART



HANDS



HEALTH

Judges contribute significantly to the growth and development of 4-H members through the judging process. Judges link the 4-H member with the outside world and standards of performance. The process of judging reinforces learning when applied positively, but if it becomes a search for demerits, judging can be destructive of self-esteem, causing loss of interest in the program and in 4-H.

Why Judge 4-H Exhibits?

The process of judging exhibits, with or without the inclusion of interview judging, completes the educational experience for the 4-H members. 4-H judges can foster the development of several life skills in South Dakota 4-H's vision to prepare youth to lead lives of possibility amidst the grand challenges of our time.

Engagement in Learning

The judging experience extends the opportunity for youth to not only be involved in learning through the actual work they did to complete the exhibit, but also by reflecting on those experiences through evaluation and applying new knowledge. Through the judging experience, youth can build a connection with a caring adult knowledgeable in the project area to develop a deeper understanding.

The young person liked this topic enough to do a project on it, which indicates the youth has some interest. Think of the 4-H project like a spark or vulnerable little candle. If we take that initial spark and nurture it a bigger and stronger fire over several years, that interest may grow into a career path, lifelong hobby, or other meaningful pursuit.

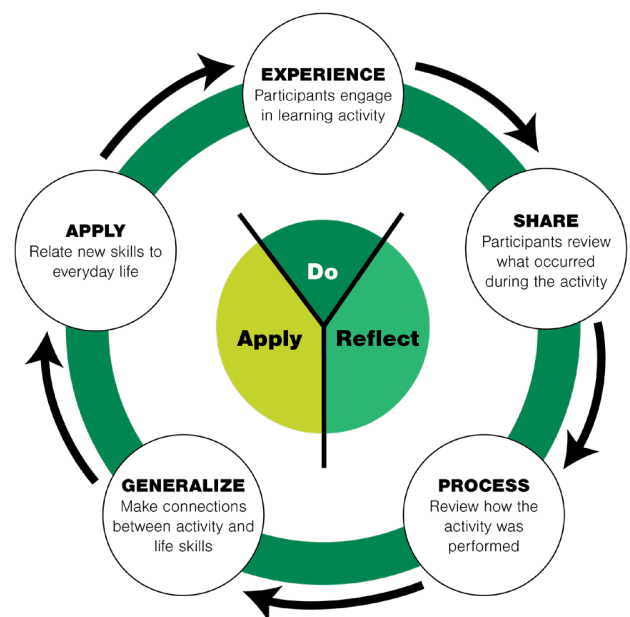
By evaluating the quality of the exhibit based on standards of excellence and developmentally appropriate expectations the judge helps 4-H members progress toward self-set goals,

brainstorm future learning goals, and anticipate reaching them.

As a judge, your role is to use your expertise and feedback to assist in fanning that flame. If you find yourself tempted to snuff out an interest area, because you do not see much talent or skill in that youth yet, please don't! Choosing an affirming word may be just the ticket to their long-term growth.

The Experiential Learning Model

4-H uses the Experiential Learning Model of "Do, Reflect, and Apply" to educate youth. The judging process will help evaluate the 4-H Members "Reflection" and "Application" processes of their learning.



Adapted from research by Kolb, D. (1974) Organizational Psychology, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall; and Pfeiffer, J. W., & Jones, J. E., Eds. (1985). Reference guide to handbooks and annuals (revised). San Diego: University Associates Publishers.



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Ages and Stages of Development

It is important to keep in mind the age and stage of development of the 4-H member when evaluating their project. 4-H judges interact with youth aged 5 years old to 18 years old. The developmentally appropriate feedback and capacity of these different ages will look very different yet will have the same score cards and point structures to evaluate them. Keeping the developmental age of the young person in mind is crucial to the judging process.

To learn more about the different ages and stages of youth, visit the SDSU Extension website for a helpful guide: extension.sdstate.edu/ages-and-stages-youth-development.

Keep in mind, sometimes a young person's physical age will not match their developmental age. Ask the 4-H staff in charge of the event if you as a judge have any questions on this.

Special Note on Cloverbuds

Cloverbuds (ages 5-7) may enter exhibits on a non-competitive level. At this age positive reinforcement and encouragement are more important than the child's knowledge and the exhibit quality. Emphasis is placed on encouraging the child to share what they like or learned.

The 4-H Ribbon System

The South Dakota 4-H program uses the Danish system of judging, we do not judge projects by comparing it to another, instead we look at standards and determine if exhibitors meet or exceed those standards.

Judges must evaluate the quality of the project, but also the knowledge of the 4-H exhibitor.

White Ribbon:

- » Meets few standards and lacks quality
- » Improvement needed in project, knowledge, or both

Red Ribbon:

- » Meets some standards and organized
- » Exhibitor can explain some aspects. Fair knowledge.

Blue Ribbon:

- » Meets most standards. Could use minor improvements.
- » Fair knowledge by exhibitor, but knows what, how, and why.

Purple Ribbon

- » Meets all standards and needs no improvement
- » Complete understanding by exhibitor

To learn more about the 4-H Ribbon system, watched this helpful video from some of our 4-H members [youtube.com/watch?v=4AOCVwKrX4k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AOCVwKrX4k).



Sources

- » KState Research & Extension Judging 4-H Project Exhibits (2018)
- » Purdue University Indiana 4-H Judging 4-H Projects (2021)