



# 4-H DOG CLUB VOLUNTEER'S GUIDE TO AGES AND STAGES



## AGES AND STAGES

4-H dog club leaders share a common desire to positively impact youth. However, many times as volunteers we get so busy planning the dog club meetings, organizing the fundraisers or contacting guest speakers that we forget to focus on the needs of 4-H members.

One of the key components of working with 4-H youth is understanding the developmental characteristics of certain ages of children. This guide provides a short summary of the ages and stages for youth and some examples of how to make it applicable to a 4-H dog club. Keep in mind that these are general guidelines and that each child will develop at their own pace. Activities should be planned according to the group's development level with sensitivity towards individual abilities and needs.



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## PET PARADES

Holding a pet parade is a great way to involve 4-H members from young to old. Focus on the fun but express the importance of being a responsible pet owner.

Tell the members to make sure that their pets are washed, groomed and well socialized around other people and pets. Give everyone a prize but emphasize prizes that focus on good behavior and care such as awards for best manners, friendliest dog and best hair.

Invite cloverbuds to participate by hosting a stuffed animal event. Provide them the opportunity for some public speaking by asking them fun questions about their stuffed animal like "what tricks can it do," "what is it's name" or what is it's favorite food.

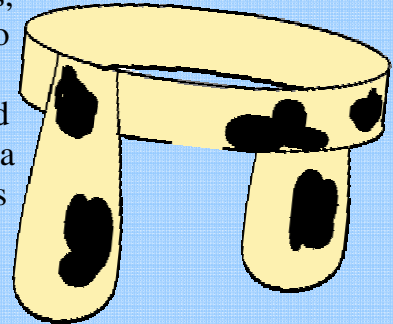
Remember the fun starts with getting 4-H members and their pets together for a social event, competition is not the goal.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF 5-8 YEAR OLDS

- Use all their senses in impulsive ways
- Have boundless energy that requires much space for the development of skills, interests and activities
- Need approval and acceptance
- Need to understand *why* they are being disciplined if the discipline is to be meaningful and effective
- Enjoy activities that are hands-on, can be completed in one meeting, simple, that help develop fine motor skills, and incorporate games and songs

## 5-8 YEAR OLDS—IDEAS FOR DOG CLUBS

- Encourage new experiences by taking field trips to a zoo, an aquarium or a pet store.
- Provide non-competitive events like dressing up their dogs and holding a dog parade.
- Try singing some dog songs: *How Much for that Doggie in the Window*, *Bingo* or encourage them to create their own songs.
- Teach basic dog care skills using stuffed animals. Practice safely approaching a dog and how to pick up a dog using a stuffed animal.
- Have them make a dog from modeling clay. Then the next week they can build a dog house for their clay dog using popsicle sticks.
- Let them cut out construction paper and make dog ears head bands, puppets and masks to color.
- Have them create and play games that have a dog theme such as changing “Duck, Duck, Goose” into “Poodle, Poodle, Boxer.”

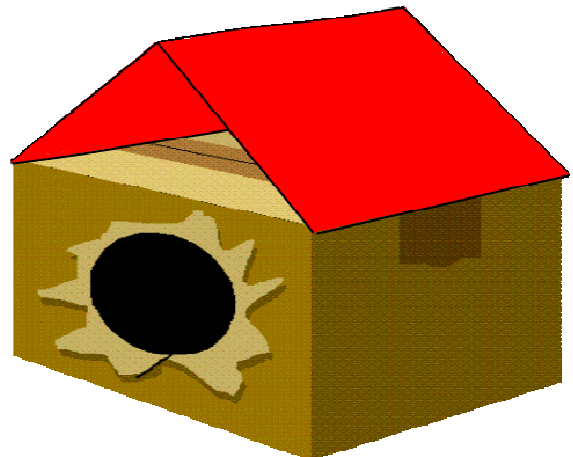


## MAKE A TOUCH N' FEEL DOGHOUSE:

Take a cardboard box and cut a hole in the front large enough to stick your hand through. Staple felt inside to create a flap that covers the hole. Have the Cloverbuds decorate the box to resemble a doghouse. Place an item in the box and let them take turns guessing what is inside.

## PLAYING THE GAME:

Have the Cloverbuds try to identify and describe objects by using their sense of touch. Try all sorts of shapes and textures of items that have to do with dogs. Let them touch some dog biscuits, stuffed animals, different kinds of dog collars, brushes, combs, dog fur, slip chains, etc.. If they identify the item then ask them what the item is used for and how to correctly use it.

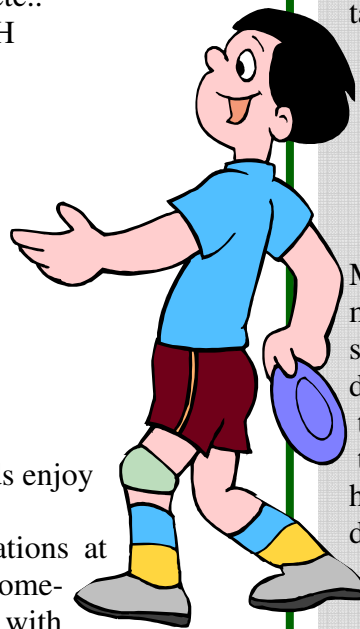
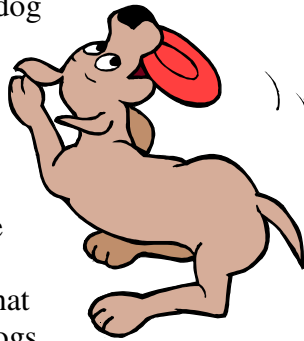


## CHARACTERISTICS OF 9-12 YEAR OLDS

- Like to demonstrate their talents and abilities
- Like to make projects and crafts
- Place emphasis on club membership and enjoy symbols and ceremonies
- Enjoy opportunities to develop leadership
- Are active and energetic

## 9-12 YEAR OLDS—IDEAS FOR DOG CLUBS

- Start each meeting with the US and 4-H pledges
- Help them elect officers and conduct meetings but don't get caught up in strict Robert's Rules of Order at this age
- Have weekly "show and bark (tell)" by having members take turns preparing demonstrations about their dog project to present at the club meetings. They might show off a new trick, a new training technique, how to groom their dog, make dog treats, adjust a collar, etc..
- Make dog crafts such as chew toys, 4-H dog scarves, dog blankets, Christmas cards that the dogs sign with paw prints or bake dog treats
- Play games that include the dogs when it can be done safely. Kennel the dogs and let the kids enjoy playing games together.
- Invite special guests to give presentations at the meeting. Guests might include someone with a service dog, a K9 officer with his/her dog or a flyball team.
- Provide opportunities for active play. Try letting the members role-play, one member acts like a dog (no collars or leads) and the other practices teaching him a new trick. Have the member playing the part of the trainer explain their training technique and then let the dog role playing member try to describe how he thinks a real dog would respond. Would he be scared and confused or eager to learn the new trick?
- Encourage creativity by having members make up their own rally obedience skills; have them create a rally sign for their new skill and then let them take turns demonstrating their new skill.



## IDEAS FOR INCLUDING DOGS IN GAMES

Many of the games that children commonly play can incorporate dogs. Be careful not to include the dogs in games where the 4-H'ers get overly excited and loud. The kids may forget about the dogs' safety or the dogs might become frightened and hurt someone.

## FOLLOW THE BIG DOG (LEADER)

Appoint one youth and their dog to be the "leader." The leader-dog team travels around the room and completes various tasks such as sit, down, through the tunnel, etc.. You should set guidelines so the leader isn't completing tasks too complicated for the others to follow.

## MUSICAL SITS

Make a circle on the floor with masking tape. When the music starts the members and their dogs walk around the circle on the outside of the tape. When the music stops the members have their dogs sit. The last dog sitting along side their owner is out.

Add variations to the game depending on skill levels. You can practice downs, having the dog sit and stay in place while the member walks around their dog, or numerous other skills. If you are working with various skill levels, assign different skills for each individual when the music stops.

Make an effort to keep the emphasis on having fun while learning and not on winning!

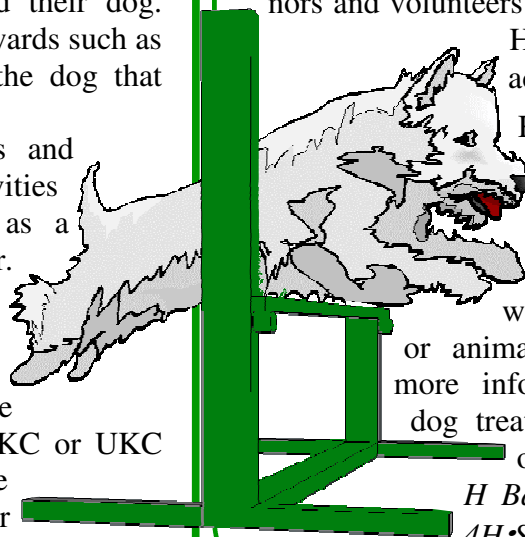


### CHARACTERISTICS OF 13-15 YEAR OLDS

- Need to feel wanted in their peer groups
- Want increased freedom from adult controls
- Are preoccupied with their bodies
- Enjoy working in same-sex groups
- Like to help in making decisions and rules

### 13-15 YEAR OLDS—IDEAS FOR A DOG CLUB

- Assign group tasks to make everyone feel included, like setting up before or cleaning up after the dog club meeting
- Design active and fun learning experiences like a dog agility relay. Have the youth work together to determine which obstacles should be performed by which member and their dog. Keep it light and fun—have fun rewards such as the wrong way tunnel prize for the dog that goes through the tunnel backwards
- Have members conduct meetings and select committees for planning activities
- Assign an older teen to serve as a younger teen's dog training mentor. This provides both freedom from adults and a sense of belonging with their peers
- Leave the dogs at home and take the group on an outing. Visit an AKC or UKC show and go out to eat or to a movie
- Bake dog treats, modify recipes for nutritious “designer” treats



Keep in mind that when altering your pet's diet it is always a good idea to discuss the change with your veterinarian or animal nutritionist. For more information on baking dog treat and recipes check out the *Oklahoma 4-H Baking Treats 4-Dogs 4H•SMAN•109*.

### BAKING DOG TREATS

Dogs love treats and 4-H members have fun making treats and sharing them with their dogs. Treats are useful as training aids to reinforce desired behavior and as lures in shaping behaviors.

Treats also provide excellent community service opportunities. 4-H clubs can make dog treats for the dogs in their local humane shelter and then spend an afternoon playing with the dogs at the shelter (check with your local shelter about their rules governing age of volunteers).

Use dog treats as a way to thank the donors and volunteers that sponsor your 4-H dog club events and activities.

### PLAY A GAME OF ROVER C-L-O-V-E-R

This game allows 4-H members to make decisions while working together with their peers.

Divide the group into two teams. Each team will take turns choosing a member from their team to have their dog perform a trick. Then the opposing team will select someone from their team to repeat the trick. If the second team does not match the trick then they get the letter “C”. Each time a team fails to match a trick then they get another letter. The first team that spells CLOVER forfeits the game.

Each team gets to choose the member they want from their team to perform the trick and also who will match the other team's trick. Each member must have a turn before members and their dogs can have a second turn. This will require planning on the part of the team to try to match dogs of similar skill levels against their opponents.

As a volunteer leader it is important to set guidelines on the complexity of the tricks and make decisions about whether the same members and their dogs can repeat a trick. Remember to keep the focus on fun and learning and not on winning!

### CHARACTERISTICS OF 16-19 YEAR OLDS

- Can plan and carry out activities on their own
- Often need an adult outside of the family to talk to about worries or problems
- Enjoy working in groups of mixed sexes
- Want to be a part of group procedures, discussions and decision making
- Can act as mentors or leaders to younger age groups

### 16-19 YEAR OLDS—IDEAS FOR DOG CLUB

- Encourage the youth to identify a community need and plan a service project such as promoting spay/neuter programs or cooperating with a vet clinic to host a rabies vaccination day
- Let them plan and conduct a youth pet show for the county fair
- Enlist their help teaching the younger dog club members and assign them mentor roles
- Have them host a dog quiz bowl
- Encourage teens to provide dog safety lessons at a cloverbud meeting, elementary classroom or at the library. Dog safety kits available from <http://akc.org>

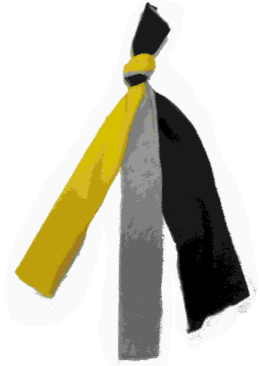
### TOP DOG!

State 4-H Leadership Team Member, Ashlan Wilson, spoke to over 1800 youth and volunteers about being a responsible pet owner.

As part of her presentation the youth and volunteers made fleece dog toys and donated them to humane shelters. Thanks to Ashlan over 2000 dog toys were made and donated to humane shelters in one year.

### FLEECE DOG TOYS

Fleece dog toys are a fun craft that 4-Hers of all ages can do. Don't worry about making the braids perfect because the dogs will be just as happy if it is full of knots. You can buy polar fleece or recycle some old blankets. You can also try recycling other fabrics such as old jeans. Just make sure the material will not fray into strings, for example cotton t-shirts can fray and get caught in the dog's throat.



1. Cut out three strips of polar fleece 3" x 24" if using other fabrics such as denim you may need to experiment with different sizes.
2. Lay the pieces on top of one another and tie a simple knot in the top.
3. Hold the knot between your knees or have a friend hold the knot for you. Now simply braid the three pieces all the way to the end.
4. Tie a knot in the end and your ready for play.

If your toy is long enough try tying some knots in the middle. Donating these toys to humane shelters makes a great service project for 4-H members.



**THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXAMPLE OF A MEETING PLAN FOR 4-H DOG CLUBS**  
**ADAPTED FROM VOLUNTEER CORE CURRICULUM, *ON TRAC***

Club Name: 4-H Paw Pals Club Month: September

Meeting Place: County Fair barn

Refreshments – Chris Clover is bringing lemonade and puppy chow mix

**Educational Program or Activity:**

**Program Objectives** (what members will learn):

- \* Members will learn the importance of Pet Dental Health
- \* Members will practice the down and sit commands
- \* Members will begin working on the stay command

**Teaching Method** (video, lecture, field trip, hands-on, props, etc.)

- \* Dr. Bolling from the local vet clinic will give a presentation on canine dental health
- \* Nancy from the Kennel Club will provide hands-on obedience instruction

**Club Community Service Project:** Sierra will provide an update on the club's program to recycle grocery sacks by taking them to the dog park for cleaning up after dogs

**Show and Bark(s)** by 4-H members (talk, demonstration, display, etc.)

- \* Staci will demonstrate how she uses targeting as a training technique to teach her dog agility

**Other Activities** - (fun activities, etc.)

Matt is going to lead the group in a game of dog musical sits

**THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXAMPLE OF PLANNING AN EVENT TO INCLUDE VARIOUS AGES AND STAGES**  
**HOSTING AN AKC RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNERSHIP DAYS EVENT**

- Hold a free training class for the public—Members 16-19 could teach the class with 13-15 yr olds assistance
- Provide service dog demonstrations—Members 13-19 yrs old could contact a service dog organization to arrange a demonstration
- Have a fundraising event for your local humane shelter—Members 13-19 yrs old could plan and coordinate a fundraiser while members 9-19 yrs old could be participants in the fundraising event
- Conduct a dog photo contest—Members 13-19 yrs old
- Offer a grade school coloring contest—Members 5-12 yrs old could promote and participate
- Host a pet costume contest—Members 5-15 could participate and members 16-19 could judge
- Make dog blankets and toys for the local humane shelter—Members 13-19 yrs old could organize the event and all ages could participate in making and delivering the items
- Adopt an elderly person that needs help with their pets—Members 13-19 yrs old could help by walking dogs and giving the pets baths. Cloverbuds could make cards with pictures of dogs to send to the shut ins



For more ideas log on to [www.akc.org/clubs/rdod/](http://www.akc.org/clubs/rdod/)