

# Developing 4-H Project Work

Oklahoma 4-H Volunteer Development Series



OSU EXTENSION  
4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

## Developing 4-H Project Work

The 4-H project is the gateway to the 4-H member. Through project work members “Learn by Doing.” It is a tool for helping boys and girls develop into more capable adults by teaching them how to set goals, make decisions, follow through with commitments, do evaluations and report their work.

4-H members learn desirable habits and character traits through project work. Projects focus on helping members learn to help themselves, which leads to learning to help others. Good work habits are also developed by encouraging members to have pride in doing a job well and completing the task at hand. Encouragement from volunteers, peers and family members teaches 4-H’ers that it is important to stay committed even when things don’t go as planned.

Choosing a project should not be taken casually. All members and their parents need to know what is expected in a project before enrolling. This encourages the selection of projects best suited for the member and family. When possible, the member needs to make the decision with guidance from a 4-H volunteer and parent.

4-H volunteers who are actively involved in counseling new members and their families in selecting projects have a greater opportunity to teach about the 4-H program. They also have quality time to get acquainted with the family.

Two terms to be familiar with are “4-H Project Work” and “project.” The term “4-H Project Work” is in reference to a single subject. (i.e., Horticulture, Foods, Safety, etc.) It is the big picture or long-term goal of what a member wants to learn. The term



“project” is in reference to the individual parts or short-term goals of the “4-H Project”.

New and young 4-H members should limit their project work to one or two subjects. It is better to do one or two projects well, rather than enroll in many projects and not do any of them well. Beginning level members (1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> years) should use the first few years to explore projects, try different things, “taste the

*(Continued on page 2)*

Quality is not an act,  
it is a habit. *Aristotle*

### Things to consider when selecting a 4-H Project:

- Interests, needs, and capabilities of the child
- Opportunity for sufficient challenge and growth
- Family situation
- Availability of adequate financing
- Availability of equipment and space
- Availability of leadership for the project

**“Piggybacking” is the idea of adding a related project to an existing one to provide a broader or more challenging experience.**

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4-H smorgasbord”!  
Becoming focused too early is not always healthy for the development of the child.

Intermediate level members (approximately 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> years) should become more focused and centered on developing a project(s) of interest.

Advanced level members (7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> years) should think “outside the box” as project

work is being planned in their main project area. Their project work should be unique and tailored to them and their interests. Older members should be able to do several projects, at the same time.

Consider the following when guiding a child in selecting a 4-H project:

- Interests, needs and capabilities of the child
- Opportunity for sufficient challenge and growth

- Family situation
- Availability of adequate financing
- Availability of equipment and space
- Availability of leadership for the project

## Effective Project Development



Learn to work smart by “piggy-backing” project work. Select related projects that have a logical connection. This helps 4-H members develop a broader perspective, as well as, learning how many things in life are a result of or are related to other actions/ subjects.

“Piggybacking” is the idea of adding a related project to an existing one to

provide a broader or more challenging experience. Several projects can be piggybacked in one year or someone may choose to make a logical transition from one project to another over several years. Working smart also means thinking about how the 4-H project can be blended into school work (science, history, math, reading, etc.) or other organizations. The key is

that you are making 4-H part of the outside activity, not the outside activity part of 4-H. Through this process the member becomes a 4-H ambassador and provides the best possible advertising for the program.

### A working example...

#### 4-H Project Work: Horticulture

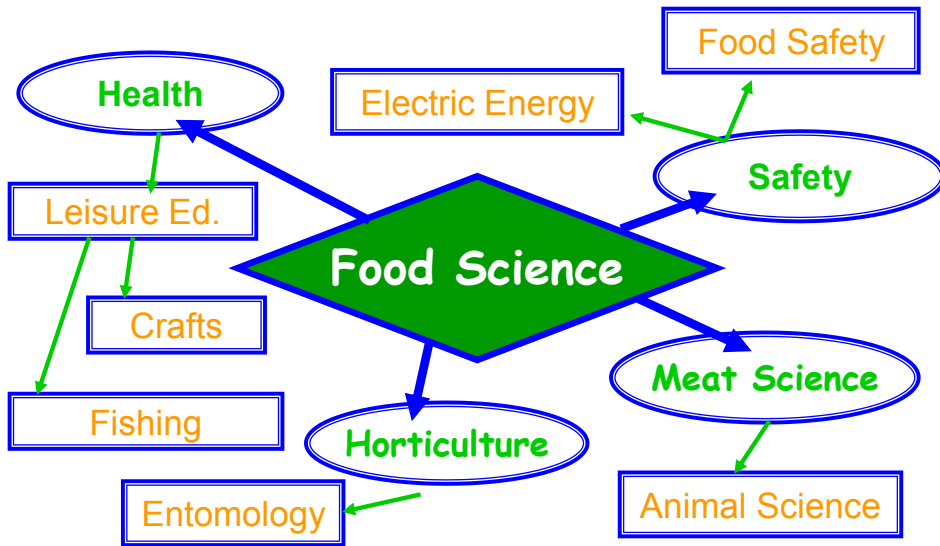
Projects related to Horticulture for the beginner:

- Poster - Parts of a wildflower blossom
- Illustrated talk on the Pollination of a Flower
- Herbarium Cards
- Landscaping Home Grounds
- Grow Onions, Peppers, & Tomatoes
- Vermi Composting
- Tree Leaf Collection
- Insect collection
- 25 topical postmarks
- Poster on recipe modification for healthful eating
- Canned tomatoes
- Hanging Storage Unit
- Work apron or tote bag
- Flat flyer or brochure
- Display on Botany and Zoological Sciences
- Jr. Nature Craft and candle
- Photos of plant life and scenery

### An Example of Piggybacking a Horticulture Project

- **Horticulture:** Herbarium Cards, Landscaping Home Grounds, Onions, Peppers, Tomatoes
- **4-H Wildlife:** Wildflower Study - Poster of parts of a wildflower blossom
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Vermi Composting
- **Forestry:** Tree Leaf Collection
- **Entomology:** Insect collection
- **Postmarks:** 25 topical
- **Nutrition:** Poster on recipe modification for healthful eating
- **Food preservation:** Canned tomatoes
- **Fabric and Fashion:** Home and Personal Living Space - Hanging Storage Unit; Construction – Work apron or tote bag
- **Technology Exhibits:** Flat flyer or brochure
- **Science Discovery:** Display on Botany and Zoological Sciences
- **Leisure Education:** Jr. Nature Craft or candle
- **Photography:** 4 photos of plant life and scenery

# Piggybacking Projects



**“People learn best when they hear, see and do.”**

The life skill of **Learn by Doing**

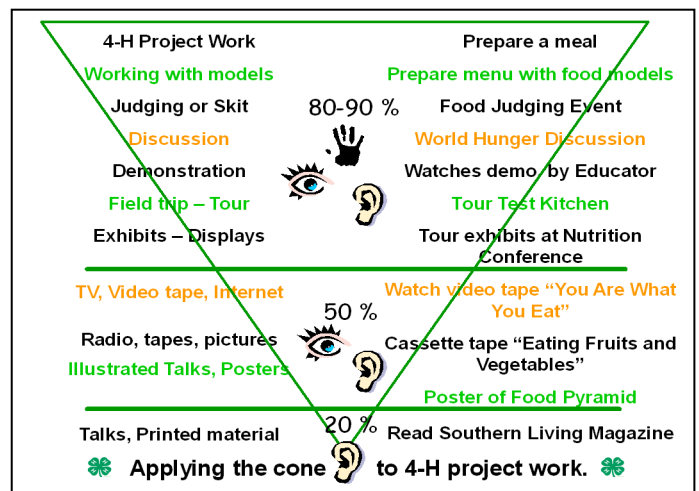
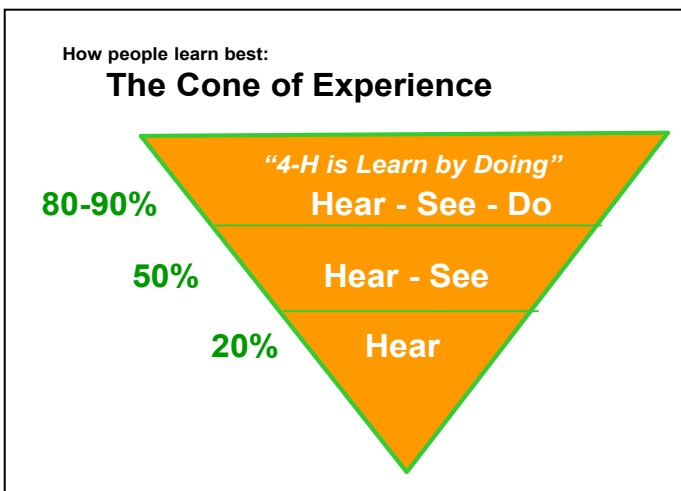
## The Cone of Experience (Edgar Dale, 1969)

People learn best when they hear, see and do. The *Cone of Experience* is a method that easily describes how the effectiveness of learning increases as one moves up the cone.

**People generally remember:**

- 10% of what they read
- 20% of what they hear
- 30% of what they see
- 50% of what they hear and see
- 80-90% of what they hear, see and do

A second diagram applies the cone to 4-H project work. The left hand column includes teaching methods we use in 4-H. The right hand column includes of a project for that teaching method.



## 4-H Project Work Develops the Following Life Skills

Youth learn life is full of choices, decisions and consequences through 4-H project work.

### LEARNING TO LEARN

Projects are real life experiences that help 4-H'ers learn to make sound decisions and find the answer. First the member must decide which project to select. Then the member must decide things like – where to place the garden, what vegetables to plant, what bookshelf to build, which lamp to re-wire, what menu to serve the family, or how to launder their clothes. These decisions allow members to be responsible for their own actions and personal satisfaction. Along the way they are “learning to learn” — acquiring, evaluating and using information;

understanding the methods and skills for learning.

### GOAL SETTING

A goal is a simple statement of what one wants to do or learn. The goal may be for self-improvement, personal gratification or for the good or growth of a group or organization. Skinner (1992) states, “A goal must be written; otherwise, it is only a wish.” He goes on to say, “A goal is a projected accomplishment; an objective; an end; the purpose towards which an endeavor is directed.”

Goals can be long-term or short-term.. Long-term goals are the main objective or purpose. Short-term goals are the many smaller steps necessary to breakdown the long-term goal. Goals must be realistic. It must be something the child/group can actually do with the available time and resources. Goals only become reality when action it taken.

### PLANNING/ ORGANIZING

Most 4-H projects are designed for different ages. Projects are generally planned for beginners (9-11), intermediate (12-14) and advanced ages (15-19). Planning involves setting realistic goals, applying the information learned and determining what was learned and if you met your

goals. Volunteers, county educators, mentors, teen leaders and even competitive events help members evaluate progress.

### Plan the Work and Work the Plan

### SELF-RESPONSIBILITY

4-H members own the project. When they have ownership or a personal investment they learn to care for the property and respect the property of others. Ownership also includes taking care of oneself: being accountable for one’s behavior and obligations; choosing for oneself between right and wrong.

### COMMUNICATING

Learning to work with others is another value of the 4-H project. The work is done in or near the home where the whole family can work and be together. As members, work together, they share ideas and help each other.

### TEAMWORK AND COOPERATION

Many things in life cannot be accomplished by an individual working alone, but requires the help of others. Each person should be willing to carry his/her load. This requires cooperation. In 4-H project



The Targeting Life Skills Model developed by Iowa State University Extension (1996)



work, each member of the 4-H family relies on members of their team. Cooperation occurs when the family/club communicates needs and desires. 4-H teaches teamwork or that “Together Everyone Achieves More”.

**RECORD KEEPING**

Teaching members to record their goals, record progress toward those goals and recording what was learned in the process is called record keeping.

Formal and informal evaluation teaches members how to rearrange goals or set new ones. Each of these

things is done formally in what is referred to as a “4-H Record Book”.

The record keeping process allows members to see that they have:

- Developed Skills
- Learned by Doing
- Gained Knowledge
- Accepted Responsibility
- Created Ownership
- Explored Careers
- Provided Sense of Achievement and Accomplishment
- Created Family and Community Ties

For information on how to effectively plan and set goals refer to two fact sheets in the *4-H Volunteer Development Series - 4H·VOL·109, "Planning" and 4H·VOL·110, "Goal Setting."*



Resource: 22 Leadership Principles, by Rulon D. Skinner, 1992, Horizon Publishers & Distributors Inc.

*Parents’ Roles*

Parents and volunteers, who take time to learn about and understand 4-H, are of greater assistance to their child and the 4-H program. Members need parental encouragement to see project work through and to keep members focused on learning, not just winning. Parents’ roles in Project(s) Work will include:

- Aid in selecting, financing and managing
- Guide and support work

- without doing it for them
- Encourage follow-through and completion
  - Give praise and encouragement
  - Assist in gathering tools and supplies
  - Encourage record keeping
  - Provide support and transportation
  - Assist organizational, project and activity leader(s)

- Become a project or activity leader
- Serve on committees to plan and implement club activities or project meetings
- Become a certified 4-H volunteer

**4-H Parents Pledge**

*I pledge my Head* to give my child the information I can, to help him/her see things clearly and to make wise decisions.

*I pledge my Heart* to encourage and support my child no matter whether he/she has success or disappointments.

*I pledge my Hands* to help my child’s club; if I cannot be a leader, I can help in many equally important ways.

*I pledge my Health* to keep my child strong and well for a better world through 4-H, for my child’s club, our community, our country and our world.