

New
Jersey **4-H**

Leader Training Series



Helping 4-H'ers Learn

4-H: Learn by Doing

*Written by: Ginny Powell, Regional
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As a 4-H volunteer, you have several different roles. One of your most important jobs is to help 4-H members learn not only project related skills, but life skills as well. Life skills include strengthening and using decision-making skills communicating with and relating to other people, responding to the needs of others and of the community, and developing a positive self-concept. Being a 4-H volunteer can be very rewarding when you begin to see boys and girls develop these skills, and appreciate that you are helping to guide and direct them.

If you have a sincere interest in helping boys and girls learn, you will be able to teach them enthusiastically. You don't have to be a professional teacher.

Think back to your childhood. When were you most interested in learning? Probably when some action surrounded an activity. The same is true today. Children are more willing to learn and be attentive when there is something to do, rather than just to listen.

We remember: 20% of what we read
 20% of what we hear
 30% of what we see
 50% of what we see and hear
 70% of what we see, hear, and discuss
 90% of what we see, hear, discuss,
 and practice.

The unique part of 4-H is the experiential learning process, or learning by doing. Many times you, as the leader, will tell and show members how to do something, but the actual experience of doing it themselves is the best way to reinforce learning. This sheet provides some helpful hints on how to help young people learn. *You can be the teacher!*

Principles of Teaching and Learning

Any time there is a learning situation, keep in mind certain things that will help you be successful with all members.

1. Young people learn best in an atmosphere of warmth and acceptance.
2. Members want to be actively involved in setting their own goals and in planning their activities.
3. Each 4-H'er has different abilities and learns at his/her own rate.
4. Motivation is the key to real learning. This includes self-motivation and external motivation.
5. Self-evaluation is the most meaningful kind of evaluation.

Preparation

Preparation is the key to successful teaching. Keep these points in mind when planning your club activities:

- Know the purpose of the program. What do you want to accomplish?
- Know your audience. What is the size of the group? What is the age-range of the group?
- Know the physical set-up. How are the chairs and tables arranged? Is the lighting adequate?
- Know what equipment and other materials you will need. Be sure that it is all in working order.
- Know the subject you will be teaching. You don't need to be an expert, but you should have resources available.
- Be comfortable. If you are well prepared, you will enjoy teaching young people, and have fun with them.

Teaching Methods

Many different ways of teaching are available to you. Here are a few examples of ways you can help members learn. Remember, involve members in ways that will motivate them to learn. Try using a variety of teaching methods to accommodate many different learning styles.

Group Discussion, Questioning

This method helps members express their own thoughts. Use open-ended questions to encourage all members to share more information. Open-ended questions usually begin with "how," "what," "why," or "could."

Brainstorming

In this method, creative thinking is more important than practical thinking. As members present ideas, none are to be criticized. In fact, the group is encouraged to list everything, no matter how wild. Hearing other ideas can spark more creativity. Quantity is the goal. All ideas are written down and edited later. An example of brainstorming could be thinking of 4-H fair themes.

Record keeping

Besides being a good business practice, record keeping is the best way to measure progress of group and individual goals. Members learn more about their projects through record keeping. They learn about costs, materials, and how to evaluate finished products. Record keeping doesn't have to be boring. Besides record books, members can show progress through a scrapbook or a portfolio. This is a good way to help a member keep an ongoing record of his or her 4-H career.

Collage

A collage (an artistic composition of materials on a surface) is used to convey an idea or theme to others. Materials that can be used include: magazine and newspaper pictures and texts, tissue paper, markers, poster board, etc.

Demonstration

This method is a presentation of how to do something, along with the finished product. Demonstrations can be done by the leader, but preferably by members. Not only does everyone learn a new skill, but the member giving the demonstration also gains communication skills and confidence in speaking in front of a group. An example of a demonstration is how to make bread. A finished product should be available because the process of actual baking would be too time-consuming.

Audio-Visual Aids

Movies, videotapes, slides, and cassette tapes are other methods to help young people learn. Be sure to preview any visual aids you plan to use. Videotaping presentations or club meetings is another way of teaching and providing feedback. The county 4-H office, libraries, and schools are good sources of visual aids.

Field Trip or Tour

This method is an excellent way to reinforce something already discussed in a club. See *Planning a Successful Field Trip* information sheet.

Simulations, Games

This method is great for problem-solving. Real-life dilemmas are presented through simulations or games where participants must make decisions. Their choices often lead to further problems and decision-making opportunities. An example of a simulation/game could be planning a community service project.

Role-Playing

Members give spontaneous answers with this teaching method. A small group of participants act out a real-life situation in front of the club. They have no script, but are given a situation and individual roles that they must act out. Participants create their parts as they act. The performance is then discussed in relation to the situation or problem under consideration. An

Skits

example of a role-play is parents and a teenager discussing curfew time.

A skit is similar to a role-play, except that the script is prepared and the presentation has been rehearsed. Participants act out an event or situation that can be real-life. Skits can be humorous or serious. An example of a skit could be a group dramatizing how to prepare a campfire.

Summary

These teaching methods allow you to help members learn in a variety of ways. As you teach members both project and life skills, remember the following hints:

- Catch the interest of the members.
- Focus their attention on the subject.
- Establish a rapport with the group. You don't have to be a buddy, but you need to have mutual respect.
- Be sure your club knows what you expect of them. They should be part of the planning.
- Processing the experience is when much of the learning takes place. Discussing the activity helps members understand how it relates to them.
- Learn to have fun while teaching the members.
- Good luck and best wishes for success!

References:

Improving Teaching Effectiveness: A Guide for 4-H Volunteers. Roger Rennekamp, State 4-H Office, Lexington, Kentucky.

Georgia 4-H Teaching Techniques. Georgia 4-H Volunteer Staff Development Task Force, Athens, Georgia.

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