

New
Jersey **4-H**

Leader Training Series



Communication and the 4-H Volunteer

Communication: A Two-way Process

Communicating as a 4-H Leader

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Communication is a key element in the success of any organization. As a 4-H volunteer, it's important to understand that ***communication builds relationships***. This means that your relationship with your 4-H members will be built on the communication which takes place among all of you as a group.

Communication is a two-way process. It involves a sender and a receiver, both sending and receiving messages. To communicate effectively, individuals involved in a communication exchange must be responsible speakers and listeners.



How often does a 4-H leader communicate? The following are some examples of times you'll need to use your communication skills.

Communicating with 4-H'ers/Parents

- teaching your 4-H'ers a skill, helping with projects
- reminding your 4-H'ers/parents of the next meeting date, supplies needed, etc.
- informing 4-H'ers/parents of the next county-wide event
- assisting 4-H'ers in preparing for the 4-H fair (filling out exhibit tags, etc.)
- helping 4-H'ers and parents complete 4-H member registration forms
- training club officers
- recruiting parents to assist with your club

Types of Communication



Communication with the County 4-H Office

- receiving training from the 4-H staff
- reading 4-H newsletters
- completing paperwork
- requesting educational materials and information about the 4-H program
- volunteering to assist with county events

Communicating with Other 4-H Volunteers

- participating in 4-H Leaders' Association meetings
- serving on association committees
- training a co-leader/teen leader
- asking for/lending moral support
- sharing ideas informally
- attending leader forums/conferences

Other Opportunities for Communication

- informing local press of club activities
- organizing a club fund raiser and/or soliciting donations from local businesses
- serving on your county-wide 4-H advisory council or NJ State 4-H Association

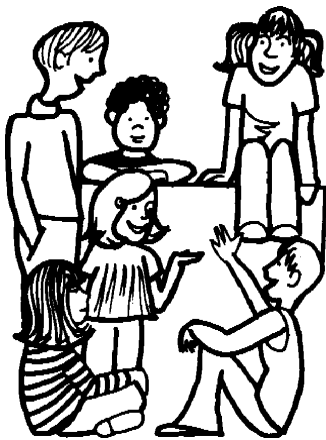
It's important to know that there are many ways to communicate. The two main types of communication are **verbal** and **nonverbal**.

Verbal communication entails one person speaking and the other listening.

Nonverbal communication comes in a variety of forms. It entails one person observing another person, who is engaging in one of the activities listed below:

- facial expressions (i.e., smile, frown, rolling the eyes)
- gestures (i.e., handshake, nod, making a fist)
- other forms of body language (i.e., turning away from someone, dozing off)
- sounds that are not words (i.e., laughter, snort, groan)

4-H Leader Communication Tips



Keep in mind when working with 4-H'ers that there are many ways to communicate. Be aware of facial expressions or other forms of nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication often sends the strongest message and can cancel a verbal message. Listen by observing and you'll be able to build better 4-H club relationships.

- 1** Listen! This means working to understand what the speaker is saying.
- 2** Maintain eye contact with children and adults—it lets them know they are communicating with you.
- 3** If you don't understand what your 4-H'er, parent, or 4-H staff member is saying, ask!
- 4** Be honest and straightforward—set a good example for your 4-H'ers.
- 5** Be aware of the nonverbal communication going on among your 4-H'ers.
- 6** When necessary, set aside an appropriate time and place for communication (conference with a parent, etc.)
- 7** Encourage your 4-H'ers to communicate. Ask them, "What questions do you have?" and let them do the talking as often as possible.
- 8** Respond to the requests made by the 4-H staff—that way, they know you're still out there and surviving!

Reference:

Peer Plus II. 4-H Youth Programs, Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI. 1984.

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