

# 4-H Projects: Frequently Asked Questions<sup>1</sup>

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This fact sheet is 4HS FS101.14, 4-H Projects: Frequently Asked Questions, one of a series for staff providing a basic overview to the Florida 4-H program within UF/IFAS Extension.

## What is a 4-H project?

A “project” is a series of learning experiences of six hours or more within an area of interest. A list of the various projects and project handouts can be found on the Florida 4-H Projects Page, along with a list of state supported curricula <http://florida4h.org/programs/>. Youth enrolled in projects are encouraged to gain knowledge and skills in that project area, as well as gain skills in communications, leadership, citizenship, and science.

## Must all 4-H’ers enroll in projects?

Yes. The key learning experience for 4-H youth is through projects.

## When do youth enroll in projects?

*Annually.* Every year, youth in 4-H Clubs choose the projects they wish to explore during the coming year. Ideally, youth should enroll in 4-H Online (the Florida 4-H Enrollment System) and receive their project manuals within the first month of the new 4-H Club year.

4-H’ers participating in organized special-interest, day camp, residential camps, or classroom projects directed by adults are enrolled in the project through their group

registration, and their enrollment is likewise entered in 4-H Online annually.

However, in most counties, a 4-H member can select, enroll in, and complete projects at any time throughout the year.

## How many projects can 4-H’ers enroll in during the year?

*As many as they think they would like to do.* There is no statewide policy setting limits on 4-H project enrollment. In Florida, the average youth in 4-H clubs enroll in two to three projects a year. It is recommended that younger 4-H’ers select only one or two projects at a time.

Children in the Cloverbuds program will enroll in Exploring 4-H. For more information on programming for children ages 5–7 please review the Volunteer Training Series publication; *4-H Cloverbuds Program: 4-H for Younger Members* <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/4h369>.

Due to costs and limited availability of some project materials, counties may set guidelines limiting youth to a set number of projects within a given year. Over the course of time, youth have numerous choices and opportunities.

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## Do 4-H'ers have to complete all their projects?

No. 4-H is an non-formal educational program where youth may choose to explore several projects of interest within a given year, then elect to complete one or more.

It is recommended that youth complete at least one project annually. There are varying levels of recognition for the completion of projects and supporting activities within the state awards and recognition system.

## What do 4-H'ers have to do to complete a project?

Youth have completed a project when they have met their goals and completed their 4-H Project Report forms to show evidence of project activities, events, and learning experiences. Projects may be completed at a club level (reviewed by your club/group leader) or submitted for county recognition.

Projects taken through a leader-led group (e.g., special interest series, day or specialty camps, or 4-H in the classroom projects) are concluded at the completion of the group experiences.

## What do 4-H'ers get if they do complete the project?

Most counties' project recognition begins with certificates of completion. Project reports submitted to the county may also be reviewed and evaluated against set standards for additional recognition and awards including ribbons, pins, monetary scholarships, or gifts from specific project donors.

Statewide, at age fourteen, youth may submit a cumulative record of their 4-H projects, called a *4-H Portfolio*. This portfolio will be evaluated, and outstanding youth will be selected for opportunities to compete for state-sponsored national trips and college scholarships.

## When is a project completed or over?

The project is over or "completed" when a 4-H'er has completed the activities he or she has chosen and submitted completed project reports for club leader review or county recognition. Projects are designed to be completed within the year; however, there is nothing preventing a child from

working at his or her own pace. The child may simply re-enroll in the same project until the experiences have been completed and the project report has been turned in. Some youth elect to enroll in the same project year after year, identifying new goals for themselves annually.

## Is being an officer in a club a project?

No. Youth in 4-H clubs are provided many additional learning and leading opportunities, such as being club officers. This is not a project. Enrolling in and completing a series of learning activities and experiences in the Leadership Project, however, counts as a 4-H project.

## Is club community service a project?

No. Each 4-H club in Florida is expected to complete at least one community service activity per year. If the club decides to do a roadside clean-up, for instance, this is simply a club community service *activity*. A single activity is not a project.

Service Learning/Citizenship projects are available that the club, as a whole, can elect to complete. These projects guide youth individually or as group through a more comprehensive process of planning, conducting, and evaluating their service to others or the community.

## What is expected of 4-H'ers when they enroll in a project?

There are certain essential steps to most 4-H projects. Generally speaking, youth will:

- *Set goals* and identify things they want to learn or accomplish in the project.
- *Participate in learn-by-doing activities* within the project.
- Participate in *supporting events and activities* within the project area *to show, demonstrate, or exhibit* the knowledge, skills, or products resulting from the project.
- *Reflect and record* the experiences from these activities as they complete the project work, using the *4-H Project Report*.
- *Gain recognition for their accomplishments* before peers and others in the community.

## Do 4-H'ers have to do a demonstration to be in a project?

No. Enrolling in a project does not require youth to present a demonstration to peers or others of what they have learned. However, this is a strongly encouraged experience. It is the first step to building the personal skills and confidence that 4-H promotes.

Demonstrating—showing and telling others about the project and sharing how to do something—is a simple way to share their enthusiasm for a project they enjoy.

Demonstrations also do not have to take place at competitions, although 4-H does offer these opportunities for youth when they are ready.

## Do 4-H'ers have to be in a project to participate in a competitive demonstration or judging contest?

Yes—usually. In order to participate in a competitive demonstration or a contest supporting a project area, youth must be enrolled in that project. The project materials and the learning experiences in the project give youth the knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to be prepared for the competitions that demonstrate their scholarship in a chosen project area.

The exception is a public speaking contest. Youth can be enrolled in any project area to compete.

## Under what circumstances are Livestock Judging or Consumer Choices considered projects?

Livestock Judging and Consumer Choices are two competitive events designed to support youth enrolled in either livestock projects (i.e., beef, sheep, swine, etc.) and consumer education projects. Livestock Judging and Consumer Choices have *state-supported* curricula that provide group/leader-directed experiences for conducting special interest project groups for youth not enrolled in the individual 4-H projects.

If youth participate in these experiences through an organized group-enrolled/reported special-interest group, they may count as projects.

Youth who are already enrolled in selected related projects, such as beef, sheep, or other livestock projects,

should report livestock judging as a *project activity*, not as a separate project. Youth who are already enrolled in consumer-related projects should do the same.

## Resources

Jordan, J.C. (2006). *Essential elements and best practices of 4-H project experiences*. 4HS FS101.13. Gainesville: University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

Further information on 4-H curricula, projects, events, recognition opportunities, and guidelines is available at <http://florida4h.org>.