



## 4-H Primary Member Leader's Guide

**T**hank you for agreeing to serve as a volunteer for the 4-H Primary Member Program. You will find this age member full of excitement and curiosity. Primary members are impressionable and respond to exciting and creative activities. This is a critical stage in the development of the young child and an excellent time to enhance a child's learning experiences in self-perception.

Researchers estimate that children experience half of their learning before four years of age, another 30 percent before the age of eight, and only 20 percent during the remaining years of their education. Therefore, it is important to offer non-formal, exploratory programs focusing on the developmental needs of younger children.

As a primary member volunteer leader you will foster the healthy development of young children and help them to become self-directed, contributing members of society.

### WHO ARE 4-H PRIMARY MEMBERS?

Primary members are youth, between the ages of five and eight, enrolled in the 4-H program. Primary members must be at least five years old or in kindergarten and not older than 8 years or in the 3rd grade by January 1 of the program year. Home-schooled children enroll based on their chronological age as of January 1.

### WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE 4-H PRIMARY MEMBER PROGRAM?

The purpose of the 4-H Primary Member Program is to assist youth in becoming competent, caring, and contributing citizens. Participating 4-H primary age youth will:

- ❖ Develop competencies in life skills in the areas of self-understanding, social interaction, decision-making, learning to learn, and mastering physical skills.
- ❖ Gain knowledge and skills in sciences, literature, and the arts through the experiential learning process.
- ❖ Develop positive attitudes about learning.
- ❖ Develop ongoing relationships with caring adults and older youth who serve as positive role models.
- ❖ Explore family and community relationships.
- ❖ Develop understanding of and appreciation for social and cultural diversity. (1) [ (1) see references, page 8 ]

### HOW IS THE 4-H PRIMARY MEMBER PROGRAM DESIGNED?

The 4-H Primary Member Program is designed to meet the developmental needs of five- to eight-year-old youth. It, therefore, is conducted differently than older 4-H member programs. The 4-H Primary Member Program:

- ❖ Uses cooperative learning.
- ❖ Promotes cooperation rather than competition.
- ❖ Is family and community focused.
- ❖ Emphasizes ongoing relationships between five- to eight-year-olds and caring adults or older youth.
- ❖ Is flexible and dynamic.
- ❖ Uses positive guidance and discipline.
- ❖ Is less time- and activity-intensive.
- ❖ Promotes exploration and discovery, rather than project completion.
- ❖ Uses all areas of development: social, emotional, physical, and mental.
- ❖ Engages youth in an *active* rather than passive manner.
- ❖ Emphasizes small group rather than large group activities. (1)



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## WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES AS A 4-H PRIMARY MEMBER LEADER?

As a leader of primary age members you will need to:

- ❖ Participate in training.
- ❖ Meet with other 4-H leaders or program staff.
- ❖ Organize and lead project meetings.
- ❖ Conduct an organizational meeting with parents and members.
- ❖ Complete the necessary enrollment forms, records, and reports.
- ❖ Arrange for field trips/tours and necessary transportation.
- ❖ Encourage members to contribute to and participate in the various 4-H activities.
- ❖ Follow University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) 4-H program policies and guidelines.

## WHY ARE FAMILIES IMPORTANT IN THE 4-H PRIMARY MEMBER PROGRAM?

Families are a vital part of 4-H. Their cooperation is essential. Often it is the 4-H volunteer leader who gets the family members and the child working together on a project. The volunteer leader helps link them with each other in a new sharing experience. This is one of the most important benefits that leaders can provide for young children and their families.

## Why is it Important to Involve Parents or Guardians?

- ❖ Members will like their 4-H activities better when their families are interested and involved.
- ❖ They make a valuable contribution to the 4-H program and their community.
- ❖ They gain an understanding of 4-H, parenting, and this age group.
- ❖ Many parents or guardians become 4-H volunteer leaders.

## 4-H Volunteer Leaders Can Help Parents or Guardians:

- ❖ Appreciate the goals of 4-H primary member clubs and programs.
- ❖ Learn to help children select projects.
- ❖ Understand project requirements.
- ❖ Learn to help children accept success and failure.
- ❖ Become involved with clubs.
- ❖ Assist with transportation.
- ❖ Have a role in special events.

## How to Interest and Inform Parents or Guardians

- ❖ Involve them in the organization of the 4-H primary member's activities.
- ❖ Phone and/or visit with them to talk about the 4-H Primary Member Program.
- ❖ Invite them to all meetings and events.
- ❖ Plan special events.

Talking with parents or guardians helps you know and understand your 4-H primary members. Parents or guardians also like to know about the activities of their children.

## HOW ARE 4-H PRIMARY MEMBER PROGRAMS ORGANIZED?

4-H clubs and leaders have several options in delivering the 4-H educational experience to primary age members. These include:

- 4-H primary members as 4-H community club members.
- 4-H primary members in a primary member club.
- 4-H primary members in project clubs or groups.

Based on the needs and interests of the enrolling children, their families, volunteer leadership, and the community being served, counties should determine which of these, or combinations of these methods, will be most appropriate.

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## Are There Tips for Including 4-H Primary Members in Club Meetings?

Many community clubs include 4-H primary members as part of their regular programming. This is especially true when primary members are younger siblings of already participating members. This can require some additional planning to assure that the resulting experience is beneficial and rewarding for all ages of 4-H members. Primary members, because of their age, have a different set of skills, abilities, and interests, which may not always mesh with other club objectives.

## Tips for Incorporating 4-H Primary Members in Club Meetings

- ❖ Clearly outline the different expectations for primary members at the beginning of the year.
- ❖ When some activities are not open for primary member participation, discuss the reasons.
- ❖ Use a buddy program, pairing older members with a primary member.
- ❖ Do not expect primary members to attend all meetings.
- ❖ Do not expect primary members to stay for the entire meeting, especially if meetings run long.
- ❖ Offer “break away” activities during the meeting just for the youngest members.
- ❖ Give primary members specific assignments that are appropriate for their age.
- ❖ Organize the meetings to include more activity offered in shorter blocks of time.
- ❖ Avoid excessive competitive activities at club meetings.

## Tips for Incorporating 4-H Primary Members in Club Project Meetings

- ❖ Clearly outline expectations for primary members, especially when different from other members.
- ❖ Offer activities that are specific to the age and abilities of the primary members.
- ❖ Use the age appropriate record book forms.

- ❖ Do not use proficiency programs with primary members.
- ❖ Create specific roles for primary members within your meetings (see suggestions that follow.)

## LEADERSHIP ROLES FOR 4-H PRIMARY MEMBERS

Age appropriate leadership roles for younger 4-H members are important. Eight leadership roles have been identified to provide an opportunity for children in this age group to assume responsibility during club or project meetings.

Every child should have a designated leadership role at each meeting. Leadership roles should rotate so that each child has the opportunity to experience each role at different meetings.

Some activities will not require all eight of these leadership roles. Leaders should use their judgement on assigning appropriate roles based on the activities to be performed and the age group involved. Because elections are a form of competition, they should be avoided. Leaders should make assignments. The definitions provided below explain the responsibilities of each role. Leaders should explain each role to the children in terms that the children will understand.

### Primary Member Officer Positions

- **Member:** Person who contributes his or her ideas and thoughts to the group.
- **Reporter:** Person who verbally summarizes the group's activity and reports at the next meeting.
- **Recorder:** Person who illustrates or outlines the group's activity and decisions.
- **Collector:** Person who collects and returns any supplies that are needed to complete the activity.
- **Timekeeper:** Person who keeps the group on task and watches for a sign from the leader that it is time to finish up the activity.
- **Praiser:** Person who identifies and verbalizes positive actions of individuals and/or the entire group.
- **Helper:** Person who offers assistance in accomplishing a task to any group member.
- **Observer:** Person who watches how the group works together and offers suggestions.

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## SUGGESTED CLUB MEETING OUTLINE FOR PRIMARY MEMBER CLUBS

When organizing clubs just for primary members, use the following outline and discussion as a guide. You may want to invite other leaders, teen leaders, or resource people to assist in conducting the club meetings.

- ❖ Make sure the meetings are well organized. Everyone on the program should be well prepared and understand his or her responsibility.
- ❖ After several primary meetings, members may be asked to assume some of the responsibilities or assist with various tasks such as Opening Ceremonies and Roll Call.
- ❖ Make sure parents or guardians understand that they should try to attend the club meetings.

## Discussion with Parents and New Members

Take a few minutes to discuss with the parents and members meeting times, dates, and locations. Also discuss any cost that may be associated with membership in the program and the parent's role. Explain that the 4-H Primary Member Program is more interested in the healthy development of their child than in the making and exhibiting of projects. 4-H primary members will not be involved in competitive events.

### A Suggested Time Frame for Club Meetings

|            |                                               |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 5 minutes  | Welcome<br>Pledge of Allegiance<br>4-H Pledge |
| 10 minutes | Mixer or Get Acquainted Activity              |
| 5 minutes  | Roll Call                                     |
| 5 minutes  | Song                                          |
| 10 minutes | Announcements by Leaders                      |
| 10 minutes | Reports & Discussion from<br>Members          |
| 15 minutes | Recreation<br>Refreshments                    |

## Pledges

You may want to write out both the Pledge of Allegiance and 4-H Pledge. Use hand motions to teach the 4-H Pledge. Repeat the pledges asking the members to repeat after you. After the second or third meeting, you may have members who can say the pledges. If so, invite them to help you lead the group.

At the first several meetings, leaders or teen leaders should welcome everyone and introduce the mixer activity. After the second or third meeting, this responsibility can be assigned to primary members or be done as a "parent and child" responsibility.

## Songs and Recreation

Make these activities short and fun. Try to avoid activities that require instruction. Emphasize activities that use movement and foster group work. Also encourage parent involvement in the singing and recreation.

## Announcements

Use this time to discuss upcoming events and dates. Try to have a summary of this in written form for children to take home. (Remember, most children this age are unable to take notes of the meeting.) Solicit members ideas; however, do not expect them to organize their thoughts or participate in business meetings like older 4-H'ers.

## Reports and Discussion

Prior to the meeting, ask members to report briefly on a prior project meeting or activity. Several members can report on the same item. If you have a large club, ask project groups to make group reports.

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## SUGGESTED PROJECT MEETING OUTLINE FOR PRIMARY MEMBERS

The 4-H primary member project meeting is one of the major tools leaders can use to help young children develop and learn. It provides children with the opportunity to build friends, exchange ideas, enhance life skills, and explore new concepts and areas of interest. A 4-H project meeting is a time when children can learn and have fun. No 4-H primary member project meeting should be so concentrated with education that it lacks the sounds of laughter and friendly conversation.

Remember that this project experience may be the first contact that these children will have with the 4-H program. The experiences they have, while participating in a primary member project, may determine their future involvement in 4-H.

- ❖ One hour is a good time span for project meetings.
- ❖ Allow time at the beginning to greet all members and allow them to actively participate.
- ❖ Keep in mind that members do not always have to have a finished project. Some activities simply allow the members to gain an understanding and awareness of the subject being taught.
- ❖ Remember, the members have short attention spans; be sure to keep the activity simple and have plenty of "adult hands" to help.
- ❖ Refreshments, games, and a short time for free play should be part of the meeting.
- ❖ Before going home, the members should help clean up and put away any clutter they have made.

### A Suggested Time Frame for Project Meetings

|            |                      |
|------------|----------------------|
| 5 minutes  | Opening and Overview |
| 30 minutes | Learning Activity    |
| 5 minutes  | Clean-Up Period      |
| 10 minutes | Snack Time           |
| 10 minutes | Recreation Time      |

## What is the Appropriate Subject Matter Content for 4-H Primary Member Projects?

There is a wide range of subjects that can be successfully introduced to 4-H primary members. The 4-H program encourages subjects that foster exploration and enhance the development of life skills. Life skills can be defined as abilities, knowledge, attitudes, and behavior which must be learned for success and happiness. Through the development of these life skills, children learn to live comfortably with others, express their own feelings safely, love life, and welcome new experiences.

Five life skills have been identified as appropriate for five- to eight-year-old youth. When selecting subjects to present to 4-H primary members, make sure they include at least one of the following life skills.

## FIVE LIFE SKILLS FOR PRIMARY MEMBERS

- **Understanding-Self Skills** - Each child is unique and has different personality traits, skills, learning styles, and temperaments. Children should be encouraged to learn about themselves and others. Adults working with this age group should nurture creativity and curiosity and help children see and appreciate the differences and similarities of people.
- **Social Interaction Skills** - Children need the opportunity to identify and explore their values, beliefs, and attitudes and understand how these influence their relationships with other people. Adults can help young children develop appropriate social skills to help them effectively interact with peers and adults.
- **Decision-Making Skills** - Children need to understand how their decisions can affect themselves and others and be willing to accept the responsibility for their actions. For five- to eight-year-olds, it is also good to focus on decisions which provide for their personal safety. They need to have opportunities for practicing problem-solving and decision-making with guidance from an adult.
- **Learning-to-Learn Skills** - Five- to eight-year-olds are

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“concrete” thinkers and need real experiences on which to base their learning. Experiential learning (hands-on, learn-by-doing) promotes this. Children are curious and eager to learn. They have many interests and are enthused about exploring new things. Their curiosity and inventiveness create a need to learn how to make order out of what they discover.

- **Mastering Physical Skills** - The developmental need for physical activity is great for children between five and eight. Physically children between these ages are developing their large muscles by learning to skip, climb, wrestle, and hop. Games and activities involving running, skipping, or hopping will encourage muscle development. Children are also refining their small muscle development and should practice using pencils and other tools in order to develop and control these muscles.

All 4-H projects should be fun and enjoyable as well as educational. Life skills can best be incorporated into 4-H primary member project meetings through the use of the experiential learning cycle that actively involves the learner in the activity. (1,2)

Remember: 4-H primary members may not enroll in large animal projects for safety, liability, and developmental and competitive reasons.

## How Should the Life Skills be Taught in the 4-H Primary Member Program?

Life skills are best taught in project meetings using the learning cycle process.

### LEARNING CYCLE STEPS

- 1) **Experience** - Engage the group in some type of activity or experience.
- 2) **Share** - As a group share reactions and observations.

- 3) **Process** - Discuss questions that are created out of the activity.
- 4) **Generalize** - Explore general trends or common ideas gained from the experience.
- 5) **Apply** - Talk about how the new information can be applied to everyday life or used sometime in the future.

**Conclusion: *Experiential learning is more than doing activities. It involves discussing the activity, drawing lessons from the activity, and applying the lessons to the real world. All five steps are critical to effective learning and none should be left out.***

## How Should the 4-H Projects and Activities Be Presented?

Activities and curriculum should be presented in small groups where participants depend on each other to accomplish a goal. It has been clearly proven that cooperative learning produces higher achievement, social skills through positive relationships, and healthier psychological adjustment than competitive or individualistic programs (3).

## WHAT TYPES OF INCENTIVES AND RECOGNITION ARE APPROPRIATE FOR FIVE- TO EIGHT-YEAR-OLD YOUTH?

Any type of incentive or recognition should promote healthy growth and development. This means more than intellectual and physical growth. Nurturing personal and social growth is equally important. Proper use of incentives and recognition can help young children clarify their self-concept, improve their self-esteem, and establish self-control.

Self-perceptions are formed partially as a result of a child's judgement of how significant adults and peers perceive them. This is done through verbal and non-verbal statements about a child's competence, acceptance, and overall worth. As children come in contact

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with other children and adults outside of the home, they too influence the child's self-perceptions. (4) Any incentive and recognition program should be conducted in an environment of trust, love, belonging, and acceptance that will encourage the development of healthy self-perceptions.

Incentive and recognition for 4-H primary members should:

- ❖ Praise competencies and achievements.
- ❖ Be frequent and concrete.
- ❖ Provide opportunities to increase awareness of individual competencies and strengths.
- ❖ Teach the importance of self-praise for accomplishments.
- ❖ Provide feedback on all aspects of a child's performance.
- ❖ Refrain from comparing one child's achievement to another's.

## What Types of Incentives and Recognition are Used in the 4-H Primary Member Program?

Volunteer leaders can have a profound affect on the development of young people enrolled in their projects. Leaders who feel good about themselves and have confidence in their abilities will lead by example and provide a positive learning environment for their members.

There are many verbal and non-verbal ways to recognize and encourage five- to eight-year-olds.

### ***Some examples of positive reinforcement:***

- ❖ A smile, nodding, a pat on the shoulder.
- ❖ Specific verbal praise.
- ❖ Writing a note to a parent, or other significant person, about the child's progress or accomplishments.
- ❖ Saying "thank you".
- ❖ Providing an opportunity for a member to make a decision.
- ❖ Providing an opportunity for the child to share a skill or achievement.

- ❖ Enthusiastic encouragement.

### ***Some examples of concrete feedback:***

- ❖ *Certificates* – use these to recognize participation and involvement.
- ❖ *Thank you cards* – give to children and their parents or significant others.
- ❖ *Project checklists* – provide checklists for children to use as they complete tasks or projects.
- ❖ *Record books* – use the Primary Member Personal Development Form to help children recognize and praise their achievements.
- ❖ *Newspaper articles* – submit news items that recognize individual and group accomplishments.
- ❖ *Participation Pins and Stripes* – recognize the completion of a project year.

## What Types of Incentives and Recognition Should be Avoided When Working with Primary Members?

Competitive events and activities are not appropriate for five- to eight-year-olds. Young children have a difficult time psychologically understanding winning and losing. When children lose, they may relate negative feelings to their self-worth and identity. Competition is almost always linked to external awards and approval. In competitive settings, children begin to define themselves extrinsically. Being defined as a winner or loser is a weak foundation for their developing self-concepts. (4)

### ***Avoid the following forms of incentives and recognition when working with five- to eight-year-olds***

- ❖ Danish and American systems of judging.
- ❖ Competitive events.
- ❖ California Personal Development Report Forms that support the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Star Ranks.
- ❖ Activities that single out one child.

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## HOW CAN I EVALUATE MY EFFECTIVENESS AS A 4-H PRIMARY MEMBER LEADER?

4-H primary members have different needs than older elementary or high school youth. Leaders who organize meetings that are age appropriate and meet primary members developmental needs will be successful. Use the checklist below to determine your effectiveness.

- ¾ Do activities that use large motor skills and introduce fine motor skills, one at a time.
- ¾ Include lots of physical activity with each meeting.
- ¾ Provide projects that don't require perfection.
- ¾ Give instructions verbally and visually. Don't expect members to read.
- ¾ Avoid a lot of paper and pencil activities that require writing.
- ¾ Plan a series of small activities with physical exercise in between, rather than one longer, more intensive session.
- ¾ Provide lots of materials and mediums for learning (i.e., paper, paint, brushes, glue, games, puzzles).
- ¾ Use lots of activities that require members to participate in a 'hands-on' way.
- ¾ Provide lots of encouraging words for effort.
- ¾ Provide lots of opportunities to interact with members.
- ¾ Provide opportunities for members to help in "adult-like" ways, such as setting up for an activity.
- ¾ Give a clear description of what your activity or schedule is and stick to it.
- ¾ Involve members in doing things for others.
- ¾ Organize projects and activities that involve two or

three members. If there is a larger group, break activities into sections so that only two or three are involved at one time.

- ¾ Help members develop friendships through learning to share, to take turns, to follow rules, and to be trustworthy (not tattling).
- ¾ Organize activities with high adult/child ratios.
- ¾ Develop projects and activities that involve or focus on the family.
- ¾ Avoid competition or activities that select a single *winner* or *best person*.
- ¾ Use imaginary play that involves real-life situations.
- ¾ Select activities that involve member's curiosity and creative abilities.

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