



Record Keeping in 4-H

Keeping records takes practice. 4-H'ers need your support, direction, and encouragement!

Types of Records

- Summary Sheet or Card; Project Record Book; Index Cards; Scrapbooks; 4-H Story.
- **Digital Media:** Project Record Books are being developed for 4-H project areas. These will allow 4-H members to maintain their record books on computers using (free) software.

Other types of records, such as those listed above, may also be done with digital tools or scanned and added to a member's record book. Digital resources may be used if members have access to the technology and wish to use it. (Traditional pen/paper project books will still be available.)

Why 4-H'ers Keep Records

4-H'ers are encouraged to develop the habit of keeping records. 4-H'ers keep records to:

- Measure progress in their project(s)
- Identify expenses and financial gains of their projects
- Verify all 4-H activities and experiences year by year
- Evaluate project growth and develop a plan of action for further growth and future project work
- Observe growth over the years
- Refer to when filling out applications for out-of-county educational events
- Serve as a guide when applying for local 4-H awards and scholarships
- Assist in completing employment and/or college application forms
- Help when writing resumes for college and/or employment

When 4-H'ers Keep Records, They Learn To...

- Plan and organize their work
- Evaluate economic growth
- Budget their project and other financial needs



- Improve their written communication skills
- Pay attention to detail, follow directions, and meet deadlines
- Make decisions
- Set priorities
- Appreciate the life skills they are developing
- Understand the values of keeping records

Record keeping has a bonus for 4-H'ers! They gain satisfaction and motivation from observable progress and learning. As they experience satisfaction and progress, they gain self-esteem and self-confidence.

The 4-H program recognizes youth in a variety of ways. A comprehensive 4-H recordbook helps to determine:

- County medal winners
- Special award winners
- Participants and award winners for state and national 4-H programs

Teach 4-H'ers To...

- *Keep everything in one place.* Physical or hard copies of records may be kept in a large envelope, flat paper bag, shoebox, file folder, large expandable folder, or one drawer in a desk or dresser; especially ones with judges' comments.
Digital records may be kept on a computer. (Although it's recommended that you backup files to a CD or DVD.)
- *Save score sheets.* They have special information and will be helpful when the 4-H'ers need to see how they have grown and where they need to improve.
- *Keep a diary with records of meeting activities, special events, trips, purchases, sales, etc.* The diary can be referred to for writing the 4-H Story and for completing summary sheets, summary record cards, inventory records, income and expenditure records, and breeding records.

If your county uses project record books, accomplishments can be illustrated by using photographs, photocopied pictures, or pictures cut from magazines, catalogs, ads, and patterns.

Keeping Records Can Be Fun and Creative If...

- Record keeping is started early in the project year
- A few minutes are set aside at each meeting for record keeping
- Every 5th meeting is set aside for record keeping
- Record keeping completed at home is accomplished as the project progresses



The 4-H Story

The 4-H Story is a tool that encourages the 4-H'ers to reflect on their experiences. It helps them to visualize their personal growth, skill development, and strengths. It is personal, unique, and specific to the individual 4-H'er, and it complements their 4-H records.

The use of the 4-H Story may vary among counties, clubs, and projects.

Why 4-H'ers Write a 4-H Story

The 4-H Story:

- Makes the record book complete
- Helps 4-H'ers see their growth, therefore enhancing their confidence and self-esteem
- Is part of the application procedure for many out-of county educational events
- Assists the 4-H'er with identifying skills and experiences asked for on employment applications
- Assists the 4-H'er with writing resumes and completing college entrance applications.
- Is an excellent source of information for feature stories promoting 4-H

What Should Be in a 4-H Story?

The 4-H story may focus on project-specific skills the 4-H'er has developed or it may concentrate on how the 4-H'er has grown as a person through the 4-H project and 4-H activities and experiences.

An interesting 4-H story might include:

- Taking on more responsibility:

- in their family or home.

Example: A 4-H'er enrolled in the Foods and Nutrition project may take on the meal planning, meal preparation, or the shopping responsibility for the family.

- in the 4-H Club as a Teen Leader.

- Learning to accept disappointment without defeat
- Learning to be a graceful, considerate "winner" without making others feel inferior
- Learning to delegate responsibilities to others, thus helping them to grow
- Gaining the ability to give reports in class or speeches in an assembly because of the learning and skill-building experiences gained in giving 4-H Public Presentations
- Developing a new plan of action with goals and objectives for new growth as a result of evaluating project records or other 4-H experiences



How Can 4-H'ers See How They Have Grown?

If your 4-H'ers cannot see how they have grown, suggest they ask an observer such as their project or organization leader, another 4-H'er (emphasis on positive), parents, or classroom teachers. Another good source is the comment section of report cards. New skills and growth in 4-H are often reflected in behavior at home and school. Other good sources are past record books, score cards, and judges' comments.

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References

Getting Started in 4-H Leadership, Wisconsin 4-H Leadership Committee

For more information on New Jersey 4-H, please visit www.nj4h.rutgers.edu.

Cooperating Agencies: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and County Boards of Chosen Freeholders. Rutgers Cooperative Extension, a unit of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, is an equal opportunity program provider and employer.