

Creating a Positive Experience for 4-H Youth at the County Fair

Thank you for agreeing to judge the 4-H division of our county fair. Judging is a vital part of the county fair educational process. As a judge, you are part of a teaching team of volunteer leaders, parents and Extension staff. You are the link between the 4-H project, the 4-H member and a standard of performance.

The evaluation of an exhibit should be a positive and exciting part of the total 4-H experience. We appreciate your efforts in providing the best experience possible. You're helping support and reinforce the learning that occurs during the project year. The exhibit is not an end in itself, nor does it illustrate all of the learning that has taken place during the 4-H year.

Four important words
in judging philosophy:
*Fair, Firm, Friendly and
Consistent.*

Please take a time to review the information provided to help “make the best better” for our youth during this year’s fair.

Focus on Youth

Suggestions to help you focus the judging process on youth:

- Youth development is the purpose of 4-H project work.
- Judge the exhibit - - not the child.
- Interact with the child whenever possible through conference judging. Discuss the standards you are using, the rationale for your standards, and the relation the standards you are using have to real life participation. Explain the value (weight) you are placing on various aspects of the project display.
- Judge the exhibit as an illustration of a 4-H member’s achievements toward project goals and objectives. Based on county rules, a judge may want to discuss with a 4-H member his/her understanding of the project goals, objectives, activities, and exhibit development.

Award the Ribbon That is Earned

It’s important that the appropriate ribbon be awarded to the participant, based upon the evaluation of the exhibit using an accepted standard or scorecard.

What are Standards?

The standards of excellence are printed on a judge’s score sheet. Ideally, standards are derived from research - primarily from land-grant universities - and are the same standards used by adults. Avoid using personal preferences.

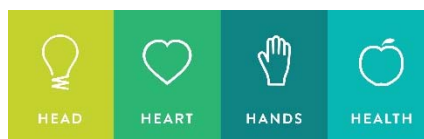
Be familiar with the standard or scorecard that you will be using while judging. If scorecards are not sent to you, ask the person who recruited you to judge, what scorecard you will be using.

A list of Official Kansas 4-H Project Judging Standards can be found at:

www.kansas4-h.org/resources/4-h-library/forms/judging-score-sheets.html

Standards should not be changed because of problems or situations with which the 4-H’er lives and works.

Judging essentials: a standard score card, positive, constructive, and relevant comments. Whenever possible, use conference judging to discuss the exhibit with the 4-H member, if not use written comments.



Ribbon Systems

Ask K-State Research and Extension Agents or fair officials which ribbon systems you will be using if judging 4-H Divisions and/or Open Class.

Danish System

- All exhibits receive a ribbon
- Exhibits are judged in comparison with an ideal standard, not each other
- Exhibits are placed in 4 ribbon groups ~ Purple, Blue, Red, or White
 - PURPLE: Outstanding on all standards
 - BLUE: Exceeds the minimum standard; may have minor flaws where improvements can be made
 - RED: Meets all minimum standards; may be visible signs of needed improvements
 - WHITE: Fails to meet minimum standards

Modified Danish System

Exhibits are compared to a standard, placed in four-color ribbon groups, but are ranked top to bottom within each ribbon group.

American System

Not all exhibits may receive a ribbon. Exhibits are ranked 1-2-3, etc. with a different colored ribbon for each placing. Exhibits are compared to each other.

Provide Appropriate Feedback

Interact with the child whenever possible through conference judging. Consultative judging involves one-to-one communication in which the judge and 4-H'er talk directly with each other. As such, parents/guardians may not communicate for the child unless there are special circumstances. During conference judging try to put the 4-H member at ease. Sit beside the member. Introduce yourself and generally explain the procedure and purpose of conference judging. Encourage the 4-H member to ask questions and discuss their exhibit. Avoid questions that can be answered yes or no. Help the member to feel proud of his/her accomplishments. Explain why you awarded the ribbon placement.

Sandwich Method of Providing Feedback

1. Start with two positives.
2. Discuss one way to improve.

3. Add another positive.
4. End with a one or two word descriptor. (define the 4-H'er's capabilities)

Sandwich Method Example:

1. Your jewelry box has a nice, even grain that adds to the overall design.
2. Your choice of finish is attractive and durable.
3. Your lid could close more evenly. What do you think is causing this?
4. The lining you have used adds to the appearance and will protect the jewelry.
5. You are a skilled wood finisher.

Positive Comments to Use:

I like how you...

I can tell you enjoyed this because...

You handled _____ very well.

I can tell you learned a new skill by how....

You should feel proud because.....

You did a wonderful job of following the project standards by....

Constructive Comments to Use:

The next time you might....

Some other ideas to try....

It would be helpful if.....

It may be helpful to practice _____ before you do this again.

As you work on a _____ an important thing to remember is.....

Sample Questions to Ask:

Tell me about how you selected this particular exhibit to compete this year for fair.

What was your favorite part of this exhibit?

What was the most important thing you learned?

If you had the chance to do this exhibit again, what would you change?

How did you choose _____ for your exhibit?

Where did you learn how to _____?

Tell me more about _____.

What part was the most difficult?

What was the easiest?

How will you use what you learned next time?

Information compiled by Diane Mack, 4-H Youth Development Specialist, K-State Research and Extension



K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.