

California 4-H Youth Development Program

Hints from those who do and teach the California 4-H Record Book

Gathered from Statewide 4-H Trainings, Winter 2008

1. **What has worked for you to get members motivated to complete a 4-H Record Book?**
 - Eliminate stress of waiting until last minute
 - Have an activity list at your club meetings that members can mark if they participated or not
 - You set a goal and achieve it
 - Offer 4-6 workshops to help members get started and complete books
 - Having them see older member's hats with recognition pins and explain that is how you get them
 - I personally invited my project members to come to my house to sit with other members to "fill in" the blank info (dates, etc.)
 - Have beginning 4-H members enroll in a beginning 4-H project that explains the 4-H program.
 - Come to workshops for help
 - Sit down and do it one day. Don't procrastinate, the longer you wait, the worse it gets.
 - Awards
 - Stars for hat
 - Money at the fair
 - Give personal development pin engraved with club
 - Demonstrate how record book will be useful for awards and scholarships
 - Being able to look back at what you have done
 - Do it together
 - Workshops within club and at project meetings
 - Sharing it with other people in your club
 - Seeing the scores of other people and what you can improve
 - Peer support and mentoring
 - Pre-requisite
 - To show at fairs
 - To hold office
 - Don't procrastinate
 - Satisfaction of getting it done
 - Break into steps
 - Do write ups immediately after events
 - Put it on the computer and check it so often to be sure you know where you are and what goals you still need to meet
 - Club support
 - Training
 - Educate the parents on the benefits of keeping a record book
 - Periodic workshops throughout the year
 - Record keeping
 - Having project leaders keep the written learned papers with them until the end of the year
 - Incentives for members to bring their books
 - Save time at end of meeting to have members record activities
 - Use a project page (one per member) in a folder with brads as an attendance. Enter that day's information for your project. It is filled out at the end of the year

- Project leaders hold project report form until end of year. At each meeting, members fill out meeting report, etc. Leader collects each time they finish at last minute and return to members
 - Bring book to all project meetings, take 10 minutes to go over it
 - At the beginning of the project, the project leader talks to both the parents and members about record keeping for this project
 - Have older members bring hats and record books to the meetings
 - Leader meets individually with each member to complete his book
 - Get project leaders and teen leaders to just keep asking, asking, asking
 - Newsletter
 - Spell out where things go
 - List events possible for PDR Placements and where they might go..
- Format
 - Don't use project report forms throughout the year. Instead, record everything in a fun format and copy it to the report forms at the end of the year
 - Put it on the computer and check it so often to be sure you know where you are and what goals you still need to meet
- Celebrate Success
 - Pizza party
 - BBQ
- Parent Support
 - Help parents see the value in doing the books (the skills learned) and teach them to motivate their kids
 - If you understand the books, host a class at home and go over them
- Bribes/Threats
- Final meeting prior to fair to update current info
- Project as record book

2. What words of advice do you have for a new member?

- Get a date planner
- Listen to the advice given to you
- Print out the forms and start filling them out as you attend meetings and events
- Keep book up to date
- Keep a calendar
- Do a little at a time
- Write down all 4-H related activities on your own “4-H” Calendar
- Use Annual Project form at each project meeting and leave it with leader until time to put record book together
- Keep your record book with you when you attend 4-H activities or fill them out that night, don’t wait.
- It all comes together in the end. We will help you.
- Just do it. It doesn’t have to be perfect.
- Enjoy your 1st and 2nd years and look to your veteran members and club officers, project leaders for help. That’s what 4-H is all about.
- Don’t be afraid to ask questions, others may have the same question.
- Start early
 - Know the requirements up front and obtain forms at the beginning of the year
 - Start keeping records of everything from the beginning—notepaper, calendar, copies of the forms as desired
 - Read all directions
 - Be sure to have goals for each project at the beginning of the year and write them down for your 4-H story
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- Keep up
 - When you get home from a 4-H activity, event, or meeting, write down what happened, what you did, what you learned and any costs.
 - Have parents take photos of you doing your work all year
 - Write down everything as you do it
- Systems that may work for you
 - Keep a calendar or an event log—list not just what you did, but if there were any expenses or income involved
 - Keep a calendar and once a month, update forms you keep on a computer desktop
 - Bring a notebook to each project meeting and write what you learned at the end of each meeting
 - A club website helps with an event calendar helps
 - Keep all your printed calendars, meeting agendas, etc.
 - In the project, have a secretary who shares with the others in the group
 - Keep county/club requirements as seamless to state as possible
 - Do your work at the club meetings and community meeting
 - Maybe counties can offer new member orientation
 - Record all the 4-H events and activities through the year. Highlight each date in green and the just fill in the forms with the easily accessible dates
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- Ask for help
 - Leader
 - Older members
 - Partner with peers
 - Ask questions. Then, ask more questions.
 - Don’t ask the group clown for advice

- Go to meetings and trainings, even if you are not in that project
- Thoughts
 - Just do your best. You don't know right now how important your book will be in later years
 - Don't give up
 - Don't overwhelm or underestimate yourself. Sometimes you can do more than you think and other times, you think you can do more than you can
 - Each year, build on what you have making your book better each year
 - Think of it as your memories not something you have to do.
 - Start right in with the new book without getting bogged down with the old.
 - A bad experience or failed application of knowledge helps you grow so don't omit those from your record book records
 - It is like a scrapbook; cherish it
 - Have fun
 - Follow Directions
 - Be unique and yourself
 - Be glad you don't have to use the old record book forms
 - Take time completing for future use. Do over a couple of days
 - Stay calm and make sure you know what you are going to write before you do so.

3. What is the most difficult part of completing a 4-H Record Book?

- Making the time
 - Getting started
 - Trying to get members to record book training
 - Break into groups earlier in the year
 - Learning to keep records
 - Obtaining forms
 - Understanding directions
 - Project reports—where do you put what you learned?
 - Where to record everything
 - This year transposing activities too new for me
 - Clarifications—what qualifies and what does not
 - Sometimes the last steps are the hardest.
 - Keeping on top of it
 - Being done on time
 - Not procrastinating
- Setting goals
- Doing the work
 - Keeping track of all the activities done in one year
 - Tracking expenses
 - Trying to remember what you did because you did not write it down
 - Remembering it is not just what you did in a project, but what you have learned or how you've grown
 - Making sure all areas are completed. New form doesn't contain an area for the story. Some members totally missed it.
- The forms
 - Hard to understand
 - Needs better lay out
 - Interpretations
 - Suggestions—have record book cover sold preloaded with forms and format
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- Organization
 - Keeping track of papers
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- Understanding where and which category to put certain events
 - If you do several activities at 1 event, such as set-up, judging, and chairperson, can you count it as 3 activities
- Writing
 - Keeping it short and sweet
 - the lengthy 4-H story
- For adults
 - Motivating my child
 - Members needs a lot of help
 - Fighting with my children
 - Leader problems
 - Some leaders don't want to change
 - Club leader not up to date with new PDR
 - Getting leader signatures

- Motivation
 - Seeing the long term good
- Confusion with people trying to help (set in their ways)
- Suggestions—have record book cover sold preloaded with forms and format
- Info organized
- Regular updating
- Paperwork for kids with learning disabilities
- Remembering what you bought and spent
- No computer/internet = hard to get paperwork and info
- Not all computers are formatted the same and each form may not be computer fill-able. Kids should not be told at judging it would be better if it was all done on the computer
- Get members to expand on: tell what you learned
- How long it takes to do
- Determine the “value” of the project on the expense/income section if there was no income-i.e.: photography, computers.
- Getting started
- Staying motivated
- Setting aside time
- Keeping track of all non major/county events (community service, worming birds, etc.)
- Remembering everything you’ve participated in and what award you received
- Organizing all the stuff!
- Have pictures being taken through the whole career of being a 4-H member
- Working on it regularly

4. What tips or tricks have you found work well that others would benefit from hearing about?

- Print forms and keep in binder so they are always kept up to date – last step: type and turn in
- Keep a calendar with all 4-H events, prizes, numbers reached, etc. 4-H stamp is fun to mark calendar as well.
- Have the county provide a document with county specific event and where they count.
- Club has 2 Record Book workshops, hand out “cheat sheet” stating; if you did ___ this is where it goes in Record Book.
- Give record books to members at second community meeting
- Keep a calendar at the start
- Write in your books at each project meeting and at community meetings.
- Keep copies of meeting agendas and club newsletters that note other activities attended to put on your ongoing calendar.
- Show examples of gold medal book winners to new members
- Start working on it little by little, so you don’t get overwhelmed in the end.
- I made up a generic PDR listing all events that have occurred and posted it at meeting so people could fill theirs in (where to put stuff).
- If you keep it up after an activity, you aren’t rushing to finish it. At the end of the year, you aren’t rushing to finish it.
- Junior leaders help project members keep up records
- Monthly club workshops to keep up
- Write what you did as soon as you can after the meeting
- Do monthly (or 2-3 month) club checklist
- Hand out county checklist
- All stars make list and present it at leaders council meeting and put in newsletter
- On back of each 4-H event checklist for each event for record book
- Calendar set-up for August-July kept separate for each child in 4-H w/only 4-H activities
- Project—each meeting keep project record and let kids fill out at each meeting. Leader keeps it.
- Spend 20 minutes at each club meeting to work on record books. Encourage you to share information, help each other, and keep track of records.
- Reward members that bring PDR to meeting up to date. Help those who need it.
- Club PDR officer who tracks what goes where on our club calendar and passes out a list at year end
- Keeping a calendar of your activities from the beginning of the year
- Write an entry after each project meeting. Leader should allow time and support.
- Project leaders use last meeting to summarize year’s activities with members
- Members receive a monthly calendar to write activities in so they can reflect when doing their record books
- Reward members for filling out form at projects and club meetings
- Get a sample record book that went to county as an example.
- Have the expectation that they will do it
- Have a reward for 100% club competition of record book
- Stars and county medals
- Have samples of record books and talk it up at club meetings. This makes it more real to the kids
- Those who did books share the importance with others
- Hold workshops to explain the process and give examples of where to put various information

- Have 4-H members that have been through scholarship interviews speak to members about the role having their record books at the interview played in the process
- Encouraging picture taking all year and publishing them in the newsletter
- Write down project experiences on your draft record book forms after each meeting or activity. It is a lot easier at the end of the year
- Use the PC
- One project leader keeps forms. Before they leave, they fill out project reports
- Am working on a sample book for the club
- Use project forms for each project so youth can fill them out as they go. Project leader keeps them or they get lost.
- Be creative—encourage kids to brainstorm new ideas
- We had the PDR Enlarged and laminated. We bring it to our monthly meetings and keep track of the month's activities
- Publish “record book updates” in monthly club newsletter with club and county activities and events telling how they can be counted in the PDR
- We have kids at our project meetings fill out a PDR at that meeting and at every meeting. We have PDRs available at every meeting
- We put all the events that happened during the previous meeting in the club newsletter so that nothing is forgotten
- Developed a journal for all events with the members of where they go
- Have club officer position “PDR” who documents club events, dates, etc. Record Book Coordinator or kids add sections that event may be applied to. Big help for 1st timers: i.e. Halloween Party 10/31 section 3
- Have record book workshops led by youth—2 Exec Board youth at a station guiding each section
- Our club officers record book workshops with officers and key leader training the youth
- Don't wait until the last minute
- Keep club newsletters and agendas to remember what they did throughout the year.
- Record books from last year as resources
- Keep a mini-journal (pocket-size) to keep notes for their projects. This allows them to carry it with them on outdoor projects (shooting, fishing, camping, etc.)
- Mentor younger members
- Don't procrastinate
- Don't be afraid to compare to taxes for adults
- Keep records updated in project groups
- Keep a pocket calendar so you can quickly record project info
- Educate all members and volunteers
- Right after an event you need to record it in your books. It is easier.
- Pass out folders at the beginning with project information—randomly check and reward when brought to meeting (chocolate works well)
- Project leaders do APRs with kids at each class
- Break the story process into smaller steps for kids with learning disabilities
- For market animals, have kids keep a checkbook style record adding and subtracting expenses (attach receipts). This makes the end of the year a breeze.
- Our county newsletter has a RB Corner where all events are listed with where to count them
- We have a pool/BBQ party for members when they turn them in. That is when project leaders sign off too. Something to look forward to.

- All record books are reviewed by the community leaders prior to the county deadline and returned with sticky notes to fix items
- Jot things down as you do it, so it is easier to remember the dates and stuff to put in the record book you do

5. What questions do you get from members and parents on a regular basis?

- What activity goes in which section of the PDR form?
- “Is says I can record an event only once, but it fits in 2+ spaces, where do I put it?”
- Why do we have to do this?
- Do “open” shows count if member wears uniform?
- What is a record book? And how do we do one? Will anyone help?
- What goes where on the PDR?
- What events qualify to go in my book?

6. Anything else to share?

- At beginning of new year recognize last years members who have earned stars, so new members become enthusiastic about keeping records to earn stars.
- Judges need to keep in mind that they are judging children, don’t expect it to be perfect.
- Have books turned in at a year end party, so they are rewarded for completing the book.
- Keep deadlines solid-can’t extend.
- Look at the examples of past state winners on the website (place more!)
- Would love to see “sloppy copy” of book showing the member (not the mom) actually did the work. (attached to final draft)
- A lot of compliments of online forms so kids/parents don’t have to travel all over and stress about having/getting the right form.
- Record book can be used for college applications
- Even though it can be stressing, it will help you the rest of your life
- Record books are so cool to look back on once you are done
- Record Books have helped me in so many ways after I have been finished and they help me stay organized
- Record book mentors (teen leaders) can be a big help to leaders when working with younger members on books
- It is okay to do a minimum book and not everyone is interested in competing in record book competitions
- Showing members how to count non 4-H Activities
- Personally invite parents to help you with recordkeeping activities
- Mentor parents as well as members
- Remind the adults that if they want to offer a novel project the kids will come (geocacheing, pinball, bicycling, etc.)
- Volunteers—We compile a spreadsheet with all the jobs for the adults in our club. It lists timeframe, what is to be done, resourced (e.g. 4th of July parade float chair, others will provide flatbed truck, the adult needs to ask interested kids to come and plan then get supplies to build.)
- If overwhelmed, only do PDR and 1-2 projects
- Start over just do what you can
- Spreadsheet for participation in club—sponsored community service—hand out to families at end of the year
- I would like to see leaders giving members a note or letter to recognize the effort that was put into a difficult project
- I would like to see no books DQed; although I believe that can be done without lowering the standard
- Encourage and recognize attempts.

- Have students keep a list on the fridge of any and all yearly activities, school activities and 4-H (choir, student council, Friday Night Live, 4-H animal project)
- Don't put on whites before cleaning pens at the fair
- The new format made it harder to get stars for anything
- Use a calculator, but list seem easier with an area left on page t code
- Do your PDRs at the monthly meetings of the things they did during the month
- You need to make it easier to do.
- It would be nice to have someplace where you could e-mail the state and get a correct answer if you have one instead of an e-mail group where everyone has different answers
- Filling out record books can help you to fill out scholarships and job applications
- Have a master list of where things may go for entire county to utilize—all activities, events, and scenarios. Play games to get the concept.
- As with most requirements, it does not get any easier by procrastinating. Don't wait.
- Appoint one CC leader for each club to answer questions
- Set up book judging committee
- Order awards
- Enjoy all that you meet
- Have a good attitude and have fun
- Remind the kids it is their book—something to be proud of—they can see their accomplishments. Lots of praise for all they do.
- Type up all the pages—it looks nicer
- Write your story first so you can get an idea of what to think about and have fun.
- Have fun
- Be creative with the areas
- Expression in your 4-H story

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