

Demonstrations for 4-H Members



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Me? Demonstrate how to make something in front of people?

Successful 4-H demonstrations don't have to be difficult or complicated. An idea for a demonstration does not have to be so new or so complex that no one in the audience has ever heard of it. In fact, the best demonstrations are usually done by talking about something with which you and the audience are already familiar.

Something that you have learned in your 4-H project or something that you really enjoy doing will make a good 4-H demonstration. If you are a beginner, choose a simple topic like "How to Tie-Dye a T-Shirt," "The Correct Way to Measure Flour," "How to Care for Houseplants," or "What to Feed a Pet."

If you think of your 4-H demonstration simply as an opportunity to share something you know with your 4-H friends, it's easy. Every day, people show and/or tell others how to do things like using a computer, holding a baseball bat, or operating a piece of equipment.

One 4-H member in particular had used all kinds of excuses in trying to avoid giving a demonstration. His 4-H advisor stopped to visit one day and found him busily cleaning and oiling his bicycle for the summer season. The advisor asked him if he would show the other members of the 4-H club how to care for their bikes. He said, "Sure."

By the end of the summer, he had given three demonstrations. First, he showed how to practice proper maintenance on a bike. Next, he demonstrated proper safety practices when riding a bike. His final demonstration was on how to fix a flat tire on a bike.

By now, you must be thinking of something that you could demonstrate. Why not join the hundreds of other 4-H members who have gained a great sense of satisfaction by talking about something they enjoy with their fellow members?

If you are ready to give it a try, the rest of this resource will help you organize your thoughts and create a successful demonstration.

Choosing Your Topic

Your first job is to select a topic. It should be something interesting to you and the audience. The more you know about the subject, the easier it will be. You should select an idea or a practice from your 4-H project or something in which you are currently interested. This could be a new method or product, or a quicker or easier method of getting a job done. Both of these things are usually of interest to an audience.

In choosing your demonstration topic, use these questions to help you decide what it is you want to do:

- Am I interested in this subject?
- Does it have action?
- Can it be clearly demonstrated?
- Does it have one main idea?
- Can I do it easily?
- Is it related to my project?

Remember, your goal is to show your friends how to do something. Write or type your demonstration topic ideas below.

Choosing a Title

Next, select a title that will describe your demonstration and catch the interest of your audience. If you can't think of a title right away, continue planning your demonstration and maybe a catchy title will come to you before you finish.

Planning Your 4-H Demonstration

Planning is the key to success. Planning gives you confidence because you really know what you are doing. In addition, careful attention to detail during your planning will make your demonstration easier. Your demonstration should consist of three parts—the introduction, the body, and the conclusion.

Introduction

The introduction part of your demonstration is designed to let the audience know what you will be talking about. It should be clear and interesting. To catch the interest of the audience, and to get your demonstration off to a good start, use a short, snappy statement or a question that relates to the topic. It is easier to make your points when the audience has a general idea “where you are going” from the beginning. A formal introduction is not necessary. The person who introduces you at your club and at the county or the state contest should give your name, the title of your demonstration, and any other appropriate information. Do not reintroduce yourself! After you have been introduced, start right into your demonstration.

Body

This is the main part of your demonstration. You should show and explain all the points or steps of what you are doing in logical order. Each step should be clearly shown or explained before moving on to the next one. Usually three to seven points or steps should be stressed. A more complicated demonstration may be confusing to the audience. Even though, in some demonstrations, the entire process is not shown directly to the audience, each step should be clearly explained. You should understand and be able to explain everything you do or show in your presentation. It may be necessary to have materials ready in various stages to show all the steps.

Doing some background research helps. By reading any related information you can find in your project book, library reference books, OSU Extension bulletins, the internet, and school books, you should be able to gather some accurate information and/or statistics. Discuss your topic with authorities in the field, 4-H advisors, parents, and OSU Extension educators. This will help you fully understand all the details.

Conclusion

As part of your conclusion, reemphasize the important points of your presentation and show your finished product(s). Display your product(s) in an attractive manner so others will want to go home and have the same result when they try your idea. Smile and be proud of your accomplishment. You did it! Ask for questions. Each time a question is asked, you should repeat the question before you give the answer. If you don't know the answer, apologize and let the audience know you don't currently know the answer. If you can point them to a possible reference, it will be appreciated. However, it is all right to admit you do not know the answer. After answering questions, thank the audience and gather your equipment as quickly and quietly as possible.

Other Tips for Your Demonstration

Some other items that can make your demonstration truly outstanding include delivery, materials, visual aids, appearance, and practice.

Delivery

Demonstrate how to do something by using action words like cut, pull, place, fold, mix, attach, turn, hold, or saw and then show the action. (Use materials and tools to show the action.) With practice and experience, you will be able to develop a delivery that shows poise and enthusiasm. You will want to speak clearly and use proper grammar. It is important to talk to your audience instead of the judge, the table top, or your visuals. You should emphasize important words and phrases by changing the volume or tone of your voice. Be happy and enjoy yourself. A smile will put you and the audience at ease.

Materials

Select only the material and the equipment needed for your demonstration and use them correctly. Use practical, everyday materials rather than unfamiliar items. Remember that too many objects tend to get in the way. If a great many things are needed, arrange them on trays and place them on a table behind you. Put things to be used together on their own trays. You can complete one step, return that tray with its materials, and get the next tray. Trays also help to keep small pieces of equipment together. Hunting and fumbling for materials can be avoided by arranging materials in the order of their use.

Use clear plastic or glass containers when possible so the audience can see what is in them—especially in food demonstrations. A towel is handy for wiping hands and cleaning up. Materials should be in the background, so the audience will watch you rather than the equipment. Having too many articles on the table makes it difficult for people to see what you are doing or showing.

When working with small motors or any heavy equipment, you may need special boxes or additional help for carrying your material. Cross-section diagrams or individual parts help the audience understand your points. Be sure to check with officials regarding fire regulations when small engines are used. Gasoline and/or oil are not permitted in many public buildings. Paper towels for clean-up are very helpful here too.

Small animals are often used with demonstrations. Small animals help to hold the attention of the audience but make sure the audience focuses mainly on you and not the animal. Large animals usually don't work well in many settings. In fact, large animals are not allowed at the Ohio State Fair demonstration contest. Use posters, stuffed animals, or models to make your points in these situations. Use the space on the back of this fact sheet to list materials you might be able to use for your demonstration.

Visual Aids

You can give a more interesting demonstration by using visual aids. Generally, posters (things drawn on or attached to poster board) are the easiest and least costly way to help the audience follow along. Sometimes only the title of your demonstration needs to be on a poster. Make sure the letters are really large and can be read by the audience. For other demonstrations, a few additional posters may be needed. These posters would have the main ideas of your demonstration written or illustrated on them. This can help the audience follow along with your presentation. Make sure the lettering and/or drawings are neat and easy to read. They don't have to be professionally done. Also, make sure ahead of time that an easel will be available for your poster to be displayed.

If you are using presentation software, like PowerPoint, and a projector screen for your visual aids, be sure to avoid using too much text or text that is too small on the slides. Generally speaking, the text should be at least 24 points. Multiple screens filled with helpful, step-by-step images are much more effective than ones filled with text. Make sure the colors you use are easy to see when they are projected. Blue letters on a green background might look all right on a computer screen, but they are too similar when projected. Use high quality, clear images too. They should not be fuzzy or grainy. Most

importantly, do not fall into the trap of reading the text on your slides. You want the audience to look at and connect with you, not your slides.

Appearance

You should appear clean and neat. You should be well groomed, and remember to stand and sit properly. Clothing should be appropriate for the type of things you will be doing during your demonstration. Jewelry and other flashy accessories often draw the attention of the audience away from your topic and should not be worn. Working with a small engine requires different clothing than making a rope halter or making a salad. Safety clothing (goggles, gloves, etc.) are encouraged whenever appropriate.

Practice

Practice can make perfect. It is a good idea to practice your demonstration before a mirror and your family. Family members can give suggestions that will improve your presentation. Working before a mirror will help you learn to control your nervousness and spot needed changes. If you have access to a smartphone or other device with a voice recorder, use it for practicing. Even better, make a video. Practice sessions will pay off when you successfully complete a demonstration for your club or a contest. Good luck!

Summary

- Select a topic that you know well and find interesting.
- Develop one main idea or topic to share.
- Use an outline to help you organize the idea or topic into three to seven points or steps that can be explained and/or shown.
- Secure the material and the equipment needed and organize it to avoid clutter.
- Dress appropriately for the activity being demonstrated.
- Check your materials and equipment before you give the demonstration. Make words on posters large enough for all to read.
- Use a catchy introduction that will get the attention of the audience.
- Take your time and speak clearly, looking at your audience.
- Show how each step is done so everyone can see.
- Keep your materials orderly, and when you are finished with something, place it out of the way.
- Practice the demonstration with family or friends who will give suggestions for improvement.
- Smile and enjoy yourself, but avoid chewing gum, placing your hands in your pockets, or “fiddling” with equipment.
- Review your points or steps at the end, ask for questions, and thank the audience.