



# THE 4-H RECORDS PRIMER



*By Miriam Lowrie*



**2007 4-H Awards Luncheon Winners**

**This Primer covers the following topics:**

- 1. Helpful Hints in Record Keeping**
- 2. A guide to completing your 4-H Permanent Record**
- 3. A guide to completing your 4-H Project Records**
- 4. A recommended format for writing your 4-H Story**
- 5. Preparing a 4-H Photo Record**

## **Why 4-H RECORDS?**

Record keeping is an important part of every 4-H project, and an important lifetime skill! If accurate records are kept of expenses, experiences, along with new knowledge and skills gained; you can learn from your mistakes and **“Make the Best Better”**. Records are evaluated each Fall to determine which 4-H’ers in Polk County will receive the top awards in the various project areas, honoring them at the Polk County 4-H Awards Luncheon, and/or presenting awards at the 4-H Recognition Festival. All awards will be based on the information in the 4-H Record Book.

# 1. Helpful Hints in Record Keeping

- **Keep everything!** A scrapbook, treasure box, notebook with pockets, will help you keep everything together. Don't forget to write down the year and project/activity on the back of ribbons received.
- **Keep them current;** write down everything right after it happens so you don't forget. Keep a special "4-H calendar" with squares where you write down everything you do in/for 4-H on the day it happened. You may transfer it later to your official 4-H records.
- **Keep them accurately.** Try to put everything you do in 4-H in its proper place in the records so it doesn't have to be changed later. Records should not have to be redone.
- **Keep them neat.** Pencil is great for project records, as they are working records and should show that you've worked on them often and updated them. Ink is better (but not required) for the Permanent Record as it will stay with you for your whole 4-H career and pencil may fade or smudge. Some youth are now transferring the 4-H forms to their home computer and turn in their records in this format.
- **Complete your records** before turning them in to your leader and/or county Extension office. Figure out the totals. Have your leader sign them. Turn in records in a 4-H Record Folder – no three-ring notebooks, which are o.k. to store everything in during the year, but will slip all over when we have a huge stack of them. Records should be secured in the folder – not loose. Include only the requested materials – no extras, please.
- **Correct spelling, grammar, punctuation** and other typographical errors.
- **Place records in the following order:**
  1. Permanent Record
  2. Project Records
  3. 4-H Story or Notes
  4. Photographs
  5. Clippings/Letter (two page)

# 2. A guide to completing your 4-H Permanent Record

This record is a "one in your whole 4-H career" record. Use the form you received your first year, adding the clubs projects, activities, etc. that you participate in each year. Here are some tips that may help you decide what to put where:

**Club Information**, page 1. If you belong to one or more clubs where 4-H'ers from several different families meet periodically to work on projects, this information goes here. If your club does not elect officers, put that in that column rather than leaving it blank. Individual projects are not listed here.

**Projects & Exhibits**, page 2. If you were involved in, say, 6 projects (Beef, Junior Leadership, Veterinary Science, Cooking, Leathercraft and Photography) each project goes on one line each year. The project size includes everything you made, everyone you helped as a Jr. Leader, or all the animals in your herd that year, not just your county Fair exhibits. Most of the things included here, you've done at home or in your club. The exhibit column should indicate the number of exhibits in that project that were at shows/fairs and the ribbons received, using the codes indicated. Individual projects go here. Contests related to your projects – like Showmanship, Foods Contests, Fashion Review – go on the "4-H Activities" (page 4).

**Presentations and Other Public Appearances**, page 3. Any time you are "up front" talking at 4-H or about 4-H, it should be recorded here. For formal, planned presentations (that have introduction, body, conclusion) include title and other information at the top of this page. On the bottom section just indicate number in the audience for each year. Include displays, parades, interview judging, oral reasons and displays under "other". If you include a news story as a public appearance include a copy in your records.

**Participation in 4-H Activities**, page 4. All contests, training events, judging experiences, etc. go here. See list under heading. You probably did these at the fairgrounds or someone else's place. Remember to put down specific classes/demonstrations so you'll remember what you've learned. Use codes again for levels of participation.

**4-H Events**, page 5. All non-project related "Just for fun" 4-H experiences (like camp) that you attend with other 4-H'ers go here. Tours may sometimes relate to your project. If scholarships were not awarded, indicate expenses paid out of personal or club funds.

**Advancement Program**, page 5. Animal Science, Computer, Natural Science, Horticulture, Leadership, Foods and Clothing have advancement programs. Check at the office for the program guide. Fill in the date horizontally as each step is completed.

**Leadership**, page 6. All leadership, including 4-H club, junior and/or teen leadership (indicate responsibility) goes on the top half, while school (band, team organization, officer), church (youth group, choir) and other community leadership should be included on the bottom half. If you are planning and directing anything it goes on this page. Include your **specific jobs** as an officer, jr. leader, 4-H Ambassador member and the number of people you helped.

**Citizenship**, page 7. In the top section, include anything you did to help others, including serving meals, car wash, cleaning senior citizen yards, political campaigns, etc. Indicate what your specific job was, how many people you helped, and how many hours you worked. Indicate which activities were 4-H community service that you did by yourself, with a club or carried out with other groups. Participation in other community activities – swimming, piano, Church, FFA, jobs, etc. – goes on the bottom section.

**4-H Recognition**, page 8. Any awards, trophies, cash/merchandise awards, trips or recognition (beyond ribbons) should be indicated here. If you were singled out for some reason, that is an honor you should include in this section. Again, divide it between 4-H recognition and recognition received in other organizations.

**PERMANENT RECORD SUPPLEMENT** Should be used when you run out of space in any of these Permanent Record sections.

### **3. A guide to completing your 4-H Project Records**

Each 4-H project that a 4-H'er is enrolled in has a record on which to record goals, new learning, new ways a project was shared, experiences, cost and income, inventory, and plans for next year. These records should begin October 1 and closed September 30, which is the official 4-H year. Exceptions: Child Development and production records (one for each animal in production) carry forward for several years. Because we call for the records to come in before the close of the year, totals should be written in pencil and the records should be "up-to-date as of \_\_\_\_\_". A few helpful hints for doing your project records:

- All foods cooked by 4-H'er at home are a part of the 4-H Foods project experience, no matter when the club starts meeting or what projects are made in the club setting. This is true of other 4-H projects as well.
- If the family has several animals for which hay or other feed is purchased, just divide by the number of animals and indicate in records the amount given that 4-H'ers animals. Costs can be entered monthly or as feed is purchased.
- Animals slaughtered at home for home use go in project income.
- Figure pasture costs at approximately \$3-\$4/month for a horse. Other animal species will differ. Other expenses might include gasoline for hauling and entry fees for shows, etc.

- In 4-H don't be concerned if you lose money, especially in large animal projects, as the benefits in education should outweigh these losses.
- **4-H ADVANCEMENT RECORDS** are a list of learning objectives/activities for each project. Advancement Records for each project should be kept behind the Project Record.

## **4. A recommended format for writing your 4-H Story**

“My 4-H Notes” is a form on which you may want to keep track of special things that happen with projects, and club meetings, events, and other special experiences/opportunities that you get involved in. It makes an excellent diary of your 4-H year and is often used as a basis for a 4-H story.

When you turn your records in for county or state competition, a “4-H Story” of your 4-H year is required. You'll want to look back at your total 4-H year and reflect on what it has meant to you. What did you gain, how are you different, what have you learned about yourself, what is important to you, what have you shared, and what are your ambitions because of your 4-H experience? Two handwritten (in ink) or typed (double spaced) pages will probably be adequate, although you may have up to six double-spaced pages in which to tell your 4-H story. The following outline may help you in developing your story:

- Part 1 – Open with an interesting 4-H happening/insight. Introduce yourself – include your age, interests, family, where you live, where you go to school, when and why you joined 4-H.
- Part 2 - Highlight all of this year's 4-H projects and activities, why you chose them, major learning experiences, special interests and unusual situations that you encountered, how you arranged for financing, etc. Please don't tell again what is in the other parts of your records, but rather how you “felt” about it.
- Part 3 – Explain how 4-H has helped you become a better leader and citizen, tell about what you have learned from working with other 4-H'ers as a junior and/or teen leader, officer or committee person, explain how you have learned to accept leadership or citizenship responsibilities.
- Part 4 – Describe how 4-H participation has influenced you and your future plans.

## **5. Preparing a 4-H Photo Record**

Photographs will be one of the most treasured parts of your 4-H records when you look back over them as an adult. **Parents**, here's a place where you can really take the leadership to ensure your 4-H'er has photos of 4-H Meetings, 4-H Work, community service, leadership etc. When you display them in your records, mount each picture singly – do not “shingle”. You can include three pages maximum with pictures on one side only. Your pictures will say more if you include a couple of sentences answering the Who, What, When, How and Why behind the photo. If you have a Photography Project, you must include three pages of photos you have taken in addition to your photo record.