

TEACHING TECHNIQUES

INDIANA 4-H LEADER GUIDE



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Principles of Learning

One of the most important responsibilities of a volunteer 4-H leader is to help youth acquire skills and knowledge in reaching their goals. Some basic principles apply to all learning situations:

1. Young people learn best in an atmosphere of **WARMTH AND ACCEPTANCE**.
2. Adequate learning requires **MOTIVATION**. Self motivation comes from basic needs, personal preferences, and feelings of self-worth and belonging. External motivation, on the other hand, is based on incentives and awards received. Both kinds of motivation (self and external) should be used in your teaching role.
3. In order to learn, members must have clear, **SELF-DETERMINED GOALS**.
4. Each youth will have **DIFFERENT ABILITIES**. The same teaching method will not be equally successful with all members.
5. A youth must be **ACTIVELY INVOLVED** in selecting and carrying out learning activities if learning is to take place.
6. **SELF-EVALUATION** is the most meaningful kind of evaluation and can be a very successful learning experience.

Ways To Learn



Young people will be more interested and active learners if introduced to a variety of teaching methods. How much information a learner retains varies from method to method. Remember, “learning by doing” is a basic concept in 4-H and is often the best way to help young people retain knowledge.

READING. Young people will retain about 10 percent of what they read. Printed project materials and other literature are important ways to share knowledge, but they should be supplemented with other teaching methods.

HEARING. Members will retain about 20 percent of what they hear. Most teachers talk too much. Give young

people a chance to explain and discuss what is presented.

SEEING. Young people will generally retain 30 percent of what they see. Exhibits, posters, and illustrations are big pluses in teaching, especially when young people prepare materials to share.

HEARING AND SEEING. When young people see *and* hear materials, they will retain about 50 percent. Observing demonstrations, seeing movies, slide-tapes, etc., and participating in tours are all ways members can see and hear, and are generally popular teaching methods.

SAYING. Members will retain about 70 percent of what they personally explain. When young people become an active part of the learning process, the amount they learn increases dramatically. Discussion groups and judging experience are two important ways members can express their ideas.

SAYING AND DOING. When young people are actively involved in saying and doing, they will retain about 90 percent of the material. Most people learn best by actually doing. Provide opportunities for the members to practice and explore what they have learned. Actual project work, planning and presenting a demonstration, and teaching younger members are examples of the saying and doing approach.

Teaching Methods

Here are some teaching methods you may want to use in working with your group. Also you are encouraged to experiment with other methods.



Demonstrations

Demonstrations are traditional teaching techniques in 4-H. A volunteer can present demonstrations to help the members learn. Members, in turn, will reinforce this learning by repeating demonstrations for the group. As they become more experienced, the young people should be encouraged to present their own demonstrations at club meetings, for parents, at achievement day, or for other area, county, and state events. As the youth progress, they will assume an increasing amount of responsibility for choosing a subject, preparing the demonstration, and evaluating their efforts. Demonstrations will help members:

- Develop a positive self concept.
- Acquire more self-confidence in front of a group.
- Organize and express their ideas clearly.
- Spontaneously respond to questions.
- Acquire subject matter knowledge and lifelong skills.

Discussion Groups



Group discussions can help young people increase their subject matter knowledge, learn skills in leadership, and share with others. Some decisions regarding programs, meeting times, expenses, etc. can be handled well in a discussion group where everyone contributes. Members will have a greater commitment to a group where everyone contributes and they all help to make the decision. As a member shares information to make a group decision, he or she will become more aware of each person's skills and contributions to the group.

Try to look at a member of the group, with no more authority or prestige than the young people, but with a special function of helping all members to make and carry out group decisions. The amount of direction needed will depend on the members' ages and abilities. The following suggestions may help:

1. Make sure the topics or questions for the discussion are clearly stated. Older members should take the leadership role in determining the agenda.
2. Keep the list of topics or questions short for younger members.
3. Keep discussion short for younger members. They will lose interest and direction quickly.

4. Older members should set their own time limits and assume responsibility for keeping the discussion on the topics.
5. Differences of opinion will occur. Such conflict is good if the members can discuss their differences and reach some agreement. You can help by trying to state differences clearly, by recognizing the contribution of each side, and by attempting to find ways for each side to consider the other's viewpoint. Don't force agreement.
6. Try to get contributions from all members. Avoid having a few members do all the talking.

When members will not discuss, the problem may be that:

- The topic is beyond the range of their interest, knowledge, or experience.
- The topic is not vital to them, not practical.
- The leader's introduction of the problem does not make it easy to approach.
- Discussion of one point becomes worn out.
- Argument or debate takes the place of group thinking.
- Members are strangers to one another.
- Members don't want to share their real thoughts.
- The physical surroundings are not favorable to discussion.
- The discussion is too formal.
- Members are embarrassed by the situation or by the question asked.
- Individuals fear ridicule or disapproval.
- One person "knows it all."
- The leader has the "I give; you take" attitude.
- The leader likes to answer his or her own questions.
- The leader talks too much.
- One or two members "hog" the discussion.
- Participants think the leader expects a set answer.
- Discussions are pressed or hurried.
- The question is a "leading" one.
- The question has too obvious an answer.
- The question has too difficult an answer.
- The question is one on which all are fully agreed.
- The question is the "yes and no" variety (unless it is likely to split the group between yes and no, leading to explanations).

Field Trips and Tours

Well planned and organized field trips develop more interest in project work. Trips create group feeling and commitment. New experiences are a vital part of each person's development. Young people are always interested

in meeting new people and seeing different places. You will probably find that this is a popular teaching technique. Young people like to get out and visit new places. To provide a meaningful learning experience, you will need to:

1. Plan carefully; involve 4-H members.
2. Be sure to secure appropriate activity insurance.
3. If possible, visit the location or person ahead of time.
4. Provide transportation (a way to involve parents).
5. Make sure the purpose of the trip is clear.
6. Tell members enough of what to expect to arouse interest. Provide background and prepare questions, if appropriate.
7. Evaluate and discuss the experience with the members soon afterwards.
8. Carry-over the learning from the trip into project activities.
9. Thank your host and/or host organization. (A written thank you from the group is the best.)

Judging

Children have judging experiences long before they become involved in 4-H. Their 4-H project work should be one means of further developing their decision-making abilities. Judging is making a decision based on current knowledge and exploring why the decision was made. For the youngest members, this will involve selecting between only two items. As the youths' skills develop, they will judge more items and become more experienced in stating the reasons for their decisions. Older, more experienced members may choose to participate in judging events at the county, state, or national level. These special events provide an opportunity for members to develop and practice their skills in a wider arena.

Exhibits

Generally, members will be excited about exhibiting what they have made and learned in their project work. This gives them an opportunity to look successful in the eyes of their friends and important adults. Each young person needs to be recognized both by friends and the important adults in his or her life.

Sometimes members will want to create a group exhibit of their work for a club meeting, fair, or achievement day. This will provide them with a chance to work as a group and to experience successful cooperative efforts.

Encourage young people to share their learning with others, but do not require them to do so.



Workshops - Work Sessions

The workshop or work session is an effective teaching technique. This method consists of showing 4-H'ers how to do a job and letting them perform and practice the same job under your guidance. 4-H members, a resource person, or you may conduct the work session. Use this method when you are trying to teach a particular skill, such as making a buttonhole, repairing an electric cord, or learning to ride a horse. Encourage members to participate in county workshops and special activities.

Workshops are a way for all members to work under a knowledgeable person's direction and observation. It is very effective when trying to master or teach a complicated skill. Because workshops are a "doing" activity, they are fun. In summary, when conducting a workshop:

1. Explain and show how to do the job.
2. Have members practice.
3. Discuss and evaluate their efforts.

Role Playing

When club members play roles, they gain a learning experience through the use of dramatics. The purpose is to reveal understanding of how things look to the other person and to consider different views of a problem or challenge. Ask members of the group to act out a situation that portrays a problem that is controversial and could have more than one answer. Players should be free to fill in the details of the situation and the attitudes. There is no right or wrong way to act out the role. Once the status and duties of the players are decided, each player is expected to play the part in his or her own way. The process of role playing includes the following steps:

- Establish a situation and define the problem.
- Choose the role players.
- Prepare the audience and set the stage.
- Enact the scene, acting out the roles.
- Discuss and evaluate.

Be careful to ensure that a role does not violate the dignity and worth of individuals. The purpose is not to embarrass. Advantages of role playing as a teaching technique include:

1. Participants gain an understanding of the feelings of other people.
2. Participants gain an understanding of the different forces within a situation.
3. Participants gain facts and evidence as to which of several possible solutions will work best.
4. Participants generate discussion and participation of the entire group.

Panel Discussion

A panel is a group of four to six persons who have special knowledge about a topic and who present their viewpoints. Several presenters can broaden the knowledge base and provide interest for mixed audiences. Panel discussions permit the presenters to focus on one specific issue of the problem, therefore, one person does not need to cover the entire problem. Advantages of the panel discussion include:

1. Promotes learning by doing. (Discussion provides for participation.)
2. Encourages good listening.
3. Stimulates thinking.
4. Makes use of peer groups and adds credibility to the topic.
5. Permits the presenters to focus on one specific major issue of the problem, and one individual does not need to cover the entire problem.

Participants in a panel discussion should:

- Define the problem and state it in question form.
- Select a leader or moderator. (The leader should be the quietest person on the panel.)
- Be selected on the basis of their ability.
- Prepare an introduction of panel members and a statement of the topic.
- Arrange the room for good discussion.
- Maintain a favorable environment conducive to good discussion at the conclusion of the panel.

Get Acquainted with Your 4-H Members

By visiting your 4-H members at home at least once a year, you will get to know them much better. Parents and volunteer leaders working together can do so much more for boys and girls than either can do alone. If you are not sure how to go about making home visits, here are a few suggestions (especially for that first visit):

DON'T COMPLAIN OR DEMAND HELP - Try to have a positive reason for visiting with a family, such as explaining 4-H, getting acquainted with each other, telling them about the local club program for the year, describing special achievements made by their children, or offering suggestions and guidance on the member's project.

OBSERVE THE RESOURCES THE MEMBER HAS FOR HIS PROJECT - Be objective about this, but be observant about the place the member has to work, the materials he/she can use, the quality of these materials, the parents' interest in 4-H, the parents' ability and willingness to help.

EXPLAIN YOUR ROLE AS A 4-H LEADER - 4-H members are sometimes very vague about this at home.

Be sure parents know what project their child is taking and what the local club plans for the year. Most clubs expect parents to help at least once during the year by serving as hosts or providing transportation.

FIND OUT THE PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF 4-H - What do they hope their members will learn or do? What special interests or abilities do they have?

GIVE ONE COMPLIMENT AND ONE CHALLENGE - Everyone has some good points and almost everyone has some room for improvement. Check your observations of this member and try to be ready with at least one compliment for something well done and a challenge for one thing that needs attention.

Teaching Devices

Just as a variety of teaching methods are important to good teaching, you will want to consider the different devices available for improving communications. Consider using the following teaching devices with your selected methods:

- Projectors
- Slides
- Movies
- Chalkboards
- Bulletin boards
- Calculators
- Tape recorders
- Charts
- Books
- Posters
- Tools
- Computers

Check with your county Extension educator to learn what teaching devices are available through the Cooperative Extension Service.

Summary

You can adapt the teaching techniques and devices discussed to many topics and situations. Use as many of these techniques as often as you think they can effectively contribute to learning. They are tools of your trade. Each has certain merits in contributing to young people's ability to act intelligently – the overall purpose of the 4-H program.



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