

Allen County 4-H
Creative Writing
Project Manual



Table of Contents

Getting Started	2
Shorten Story Guidelines	2
Poetry Guidelines	3
Children’s Story Guidelines	3
Comic Book Guidelines	4
Micro-Fiction Guidelines	4
Special Notes	5
Sample Title Page	6

Getting Started

Your first step is to choose a subject. Maybe you want to write about a person or pet in your life. Maybe you want to write about your backyard. Do you like history? Maybe you want to write a story about a cowboy in the old west. Perhaps you have imagined what it would be like to live in a different state or country. Is there a story inside your imagined thoughts? There are no limits to what you can write about!

The next step is to choose your project category. Do you like to tell stories or do you prefer to express yourself through poems? Do you want to create illustrations to help tell your story? Maybe you want to submit a writing project in a couple different categories!

Now all you have to do is write! Remember, even famous writers have to create many drafts of their work, so don't be discouraged if your first try doesn't turn out perfect. Keep writing and refining your style. Writing is a way to express yourself, but it can take a lot of practice to figure out how to make your unique voice come through.

Short Story Guidelines

1. For the short story category you may write a narrative story, a play, or a screenplay. Remember to meet the length requirement specific to your Exhibitor Level.
2. You may find it helpful to create an outline. Write down your ideas on how to begin the story, the major events in your story, and your ideas for how you want the story to end. Remember, an outline can be flexible. You can make changes as you write. An outline allows you to brainstorm and gives you a place to start.
3. Develop your characters. Pick your character names and write a short description of who they are and what they look like.
4. It may be helpful to carry a small notebook with you at all times. Make note of any ideas or plot points that you think of, you never know when inspiration will strike!
5. Do any research you may need to do and write down your sources. Even when your story is fiction you still may need to research geographical locations or historical eras.
6. Once you have a first draft you can start the proofreading and revision process. Check for spelling and grammatical errors, punctuation problems, or overused words. You can use a dictionary and thesaurus to help you.
7. You may include illustrations to enhance your short story. Illustrations are completely optional.

Submitting your Short Story Project

The pages of your project should be compiled in this order:

1. Title Page
2. Your writing project (clean copy for display)
3. Copy of writing project for judges
4. Record Sheet

Poetry Guidelines

1. For the poetry category you may write a poem or song lyrics of any length.
2. A poem sets out to present an idea. Often this idea has come from the emotional stimulus of a scene that may appear to be very ordinary to another person, but to the poet is a unique experience worthy of putting down in poetic form.
3. It may be helpful to carry a small notebook with you at all times. Make note of any ideas or observations that strike you as interesting, you never know when inspiration will strike!
4. Choose your words carefully to express what you want to say in a few words or lines.
5. Keep a dictionary, thesaurus, and a rhyming dictionary nearby as you write your poetry.
6. After the poem is finished, go back and review your poem for correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
7. If you wish, you may include a short description of the poetry form you used. For example, if you choose to submit a Haiku (a Japanese verse form), you could write a description and brief history of the Haiku.
8. You may include illustrations to enhance your poem. Illustrations are completely optional.

Submitting your Poetry Project

The pages of your project should be compiled in this order:

1. Title Page
2. Description of poetry form (optional)
3. Your writing project (clean copy for display)
4. Copy of writing project for judges
5. Record Sheet

Children's Story Guidelines

1. An exhibit in this category is a story written specifically for young children and includes illustrations.
2. Choose a subject based on subjects that preschool children are interested in and ones that are appropriate for young children. Avoid complex, heavy subjects such as divorce, death, or abuse. Keep in mind the maturity level of the child for whom the book is written.
3. Use words that children can understand or are capable of learning.
4. Illustrations are required. Young children follow along with the reader of the story by looking at the pictures. Illustrations can be hand drawn, or you may use computer graphics, photos, stencils, or tracings.
5. You may want to create an illustrated book cover to make the outside of your book eye catching. This is completely optional.

Submitting your Children's Story Project

The pages of your project should be compiled in this order:

1. Illustrated Book Cover (optional)
2. Title Page
3. Your writing project (clean copy for display)
4. Copy of writing project for judges

5. Record Sheet

Comic Book Guidelines

1. An exhibit in this category is a story in comic book format with illustrations. Remember to meet the length requirement specific to your Exhibitor Level.
2. You may find it helpful to create an outline. Write down your ideas on how to begin the story, the major events in your story, and your ideas for how you want the story to end. Remember, an outline can be flexible. You can make changes as you write. An outline allows you to brainstorm and gives you a place to start.
3. Develop your characters. Pick your character names and write a short description of who they are and what they look like.
4. It may be helpful to carry a small notebook with you at all times. Make note of any ideas or plot points that you think of, you never know when inspiration will strike!
5. Illustrations are required for this project. Illustrations can be hand drawn, or you may use computer graphics, photos, stencils, or tracings.
6. Comics tell their story in panels and often use speech bubbles to allow the characters to speak. It might be useful to read some comic books to research style and types of artwork that professional comic book writers use. Just be sure that your story and characters are your own original works.
7. Once you have a first draft you can start the proofreading and revision process. Check your spelling, grammar, and punctuation. You can use a dictionary and thesaurus to help you.
8. You may want to create an illustrated book cover to make the outside of your book eye catching. This is completely optional.

Submitting your Comic Book Project

The pages of your project should be compiled in this order:

1. Illustrated Book Cover (optional)
2. Title Page
3. Your writing project (clean copy for display)
4. Copy of writing project for judges
5. Record Sheet

Micro-fiction Guidelines

1. An exhibit in this category is a story told in exactly 50 words, no more and no less.
2. At first it may sound easy to tell a 50-word story, but it can be tricky. You still need to tell a story and portray an event, feeling, or situation. You should still have a character or characters. The hard part is to

take a story and condense it into 50 words. The other part is making sure it's exactly 50 words, which may mean rearranging words, cutting out extra words, or using different words to express your story.

3. Every word counts, including "a", "the", "and", etc.
4. It may be helpful to research and read some other 50-word stories. There are many resources online with examples from other authors. It's ok to read and research other authors, but be sure that your exhibit is your own original work.
5. Once you have a first draft you can start the proofreading and revision process. Check for spelling and grammatical errors, punctuation problems, or overused words. You can use a dictionary and thesaurus to help you.
6. After you make revisions, double check the word count to make sure you are still at 50 words.
7. You may include illustrations to enhance your story. Illustrations are completely optional.

Submitting your Micro-fiction Project

The pages of your project should be compiled in this order:

1. Title Page
2. Your writing project (clean copy for display)
3. Copy of writing project for judges
4. Record Sheet

Special Notes:

Vulgarity and Obscenities: Do not use cuss words, overly gross or violent actions, or intimate subject matter in your writing. Your story may include action scenes or romantic relationships, but keep the subject matter appropriate and tasteful. Lengthy descriptions of gore or sexual situations are not appropriate for 4-H projects. If your parent, 4-H leader, or school teacher wouldn't like it in your paper, then you can assume that a 4-H judge wouldn't like it either. Make sure your writing reflects your good manners and the high quality of the 4-H program in our county.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is taking the thoughts or writings of another person and using them as your own. It is stealing. It is also against the law when a piece of writing is copyrighted. You cannot copy the work of another author, classmate, or 4-H member. Be sure that the thoughts and words you write are your own. It is ok to have someone read your work and give you corrections or suggestions, but make sure the writing is still your original work.

Judging: Judging for the Creative Writing project will be closed. 4-H members will not be able to directly speak with the judge or view the judging process. Judging written works can be a lengthy process and closed judging allows the judges to take their time and not feel rushed. The judges will provide you with comments and suggestions to help you learn and improve your writing skills.

Sample Title Page

“Title”

By John Smith
June 15, 2014

Category: Poetry
Exhibitor Level: Intermediate
Club: Jackson Ag

*This Creative Writing Project Manual was adapted from manuals in Clay, Jasper, LaGrange, Noble, White, Blackford, Parke, and Porter counties.

Allen County 4-H
Creative Writing Project Manual
Used in Allen County with permission from Hamilton County
4-H Creative Writing