



Mini 4-H CAKE DECORATING



An Introduction to 4-H for Youth in Grades K - 2

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4-H Facts



The 4-H Symbol: A four leaf clover with an “H” in each leaf.

4-H Colors: Green and White

The 4-H Motto: To make the best better!

The 4-H Pledge:

**I Pledge
My Head to clearer thinking
My Heart to greater loyalty
My Hands to larger service
My Health to better living
For my Club,
My Community,
My Country,
and my World.**

Mini 4-H

Welcome to Mini 4-H! You are now a member of the Elkhart County 4-H family! We hope that you will have lots of fun learning new things in your 4-H career.

Mini 4-H is designed for youth in Kindergarten through Second grade. It will give you a taste of the 4-H program as well as help you to explore a variety of project areas.

Mini 4-H'ers may enroll in two different projects each year. This manual contains fun, age-appropriate activities to complete throughout the 4-H year. These activities will help you to learn about the project you have chosen. Additionally, the manual contains all instructions for the exhibit you will be preparing for the Elkhart County 4-H Fair in July.

There is no competition in the Mini 4-H program. Each child who completes a project for the Fair will receive the same green completion ribbon and certificate. Judges comment sheets are provided only as a way to help you do your very best on future projects.

Mini 4-H does not have regular monthly meetings. Try to attend the special activities planned especially for YOU! These will give you a chance to meet the project leaders, have some hands-on fun, and ask questions about your important Fair display. Mini 4-H is FUN! You will enjoy it.

Once you enter the third grade you can join a regular 4-H club that meets monthly. You must enroll each year of your 4-H career.

If you have questions about the Mini 4-H program, please call the Purdue Cooperative Extension Office at 574-533-0554. We will be happy to answer your questions.

As a Mini 4-H parent, please help guide and encourage your child through the activities. Work with them to help them to “learn by doing”. Activities are designed to help your child learn about the project they have chosen. It is not required that they complete all the activities. Choose those that interest you and your child.

What is Cake Decorating?

This project will teach you the basics of cake decorating. This will guide you into cake decorating for a future project in regular 4-H.

WHAT TO EXHIBIT (instructions for your exhibit)

- Option A: Display 1 decorated 9-inch Styrofoam circle 3 inch thick.
- Option B: Mini 4-H Cake Decorating Poster (Learning Journey)
- Option C: Skills Sheet Display

Materials needed:

- ❖ Styrofoam 9-inch circle, 3 inches thick.
- ❖ Frosting (store bought (for practice only) or basic butter cream recipe. Any color or flavor. Recipe below if making your own icing.
- ❖ Decorating bag (8-inch professional decorating bag)
- ❖ Decorating tips (#18 star tip, zig-zag tip, #3 writing tip, #2D drop flower tip)
- ❖ Decorating coupler (optional)
- ❖ Spatula or kitchen knife
- ❖ 12-inch circle (approximately 3/8" thick) of cardboard covered with foil.

What you will do:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water and make sure your working area is clean.
2. Your cake form must have frosting. Smooth the top of the icing using a spatula dipped in hot water. Dip your spatula and shake off water before putting it on your cake.
3. **Your cake form must have a border made of frosting on the top and bottom edges.**
4. Make a design in the center of the Styrofoam circle using frosting.
5. Do not refrigerate decorated cake. If you do, when you take them out they will sweat, fade and sometimes the frosting runs off. The colors can also run together.
6. You will exhibit 1 iced cake form with a border around the outside. Be sure to decorate the sides of the form too. Place the cake form on a 12-inch foil covered cardboard circle.
7. Clean up your work area and put supplies away.
8. If this will be your exhibit for the county fair, place exhibit tag & record sheet in Ziploc bag or envelope and tape to the bottom of the cake board.

BUTTERCREAM ICING RECIPE

Buttercream Icing

(Yields 3 cups of stiff consistency icing)

Materials needed for this activity:

- 4 cups sifted confectioner's sugar (approximately 1 lb.)
- 1 cup solid vegetable shortening
- 1 tsp. Wilton® Clear Vanilla Extract (do not include vanilla for fair exhibit)
- 2 Tbsp. milk or water (use water for fair exhibit)
- Hand mixer or stand mixer

What you will do:

1. Sift confectioners' sugar into a large mixing bowl and set aside.
2. Cream shortening, vanilla and milk or water.
3. Gradually add sugar and mix on medium speed using hand or stand mixer until all ingredients have been thoroughly mixed together. Blend an additional minute or so, until creamy.
4. **For medium icing consistency:** Add one teaspoon milk or water to each cup of stiff consistency icing (one **additional** tablespoon of liquid when you are using the full recipe). Mix until all ingredients are well blended.
5. **For thin icing consistency:** Add two teaspoons of milk or water for each cup of stiff consistency icing (two tablespoons of **additional** liquid for the full recipe). Mix until all ingredients are well blended.



Adding Color to Your Icing:

Add color to white icing for beautiful decorations. Wilton® Icing Colors are gel based and will not add liquid to your icing, making it too thin for certain decorations.

To mix colors, begin with white icing and add color a little bit at a time until you achieve the shade you desire. Use a toothpick to add icing color – just dip the toothpick into the color, swirl it in the icing, and blend well with a spatula. Always use fresh toothpicks when adding more color.

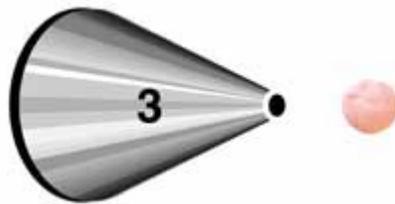
Preparing the Bag:

Decorating bags hold the icing and decorating tip so you can create all kinds of decorations. Using a Quick-Change Coupler allows you to use multiple decorating tips with the same decorating bag. Prepare your bag as follows:

1. Unscrew coupler ring from base.
2. Push coupler base as far down into decorating bag as it will go. With a pen or pencil, mark the spot on the outside of the bag where the bottom thread is outlined. Take coupler base out of bag and cut across mark.
3. Push coupler base back down into bag opening. Position tip over top of coupler and screw coupler ring in place to secure. To change tips, unscrew ring, replace tip and re-screw ring.

EXPLAINING THE TOOLS

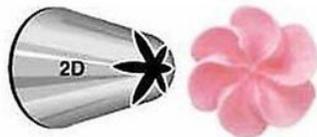
Tip #3 Round



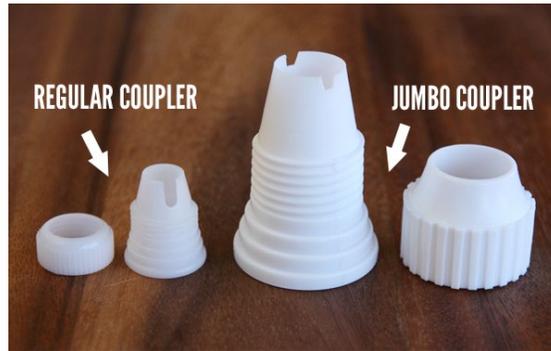
Tip #18 Star (*tip #16 can be used in place of #18 if needed*)



Tip #2D Drop Flower



Quick-Change Coupler



Decorating Bag



The 3 Essentials of Cake Decorating

Every decoration you make is the result of three things working together:

1. **Icing Consistency:** If the consistency of your icing isn't just right, your decorations will not be right either.
 - a. Stiff consistency holds a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch peak on the spatula and is used for flowers with upright petals.
 - b. Medium consistency icing is used for borders.
 - c. Thin consistency icing is used for writing and for frosting a cake.
2. **Correct Bag Position:** Bag positions are described in terms of both **angle** and **clock** position.

ANGLE:

Angle refers to the position of the bag relative to the work surface. The basic two bag positions are:

90-degree angle, or straight up, perpendicular to the surface. Used when making stars.



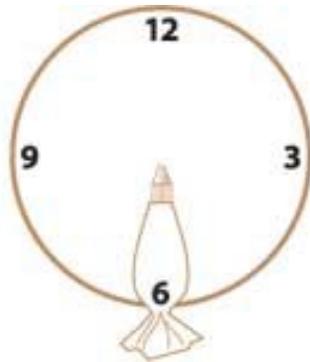
45-degree angle, or halfway between vertical and horizontal. Used for writing and borders.



CLOCK POSITION:

The hours on the clock face correspond to the direction you should point the end of the bag.

With the tip in the center of the clock, the back of the bag will point to the hour.



3. **Pressure Control:** The size and uniformity of your icing designs are affected by the amount of pressure you apply to the bag and the steadiness of the pressure. Learn to apply pressure consistently so that just the right amount of icing flows through the tip. Practice will help you achieve this control.

FILLING THE BAG:

Fold the bag halfway down making a cuff and hold it like an ice cream cone underneath the cuff.



Using a spatula, take a small amount of icing and insert it down the middle of the bag. Using the hand holding the bag, pinch the spatula before pulling it out so that the icing will stay in the bag and the spatula comes out clean. Repeat until bag is 1/3 full or until there is enough icing to fit in the palm of your hand.



Once icing is in the bag, pinch the top between your thumb and forefinger, pushing icing down as you squeeze. Twist bag to keep closed. You are ready to decorate.



ROUND TIP DECORATING

Printing:

Materials needed:

- Practice sheet
- Tip #3
- Thin consistency icing
- 45-degree angle at 6:00 for vertical and curving lines, 3:00 (9:00) for horizontal lines

1. With tip lightly touching the surface, start to squeeze bag with a steady, even pressure.
2. Lift the tip off of the surface to allow icing string to drop.
3. Stop pressure and touch tip to surface to attach.
4. Pull away.



Writing:

Materials needed:

- Practice sheet
 - Tip #3
 - Thin consistency icing
 - 45-degree angle at 3:00
 - Tip lightly touching surface
1. Squeeze steadily and move the tip along the surface in a smooth continuous motion.
 2. Move your entire arm without flexing your wrist as you write.



Dots:

1. Position bag straight up and squeeze, keeping tip in icing until dot is the size you want.
2. Stop pressure, pull tip up and to the side to help prevent points in the dots.



Star Tip Decorating:

The Star

Materials needed:

- Practice sheet
 - Medium consistency icing
 - Star tip #18 (or #16)
 - Angle (straight up)
 - Tip: 1/8 inch above surface
1. Squeeze the bag to form star.
 2. Stop pressure and pull tip straight up and away.



Star Border:

Pipe a row of stars all the same height and width.

Star Fill-In:

Start with a row of stars piped evenly and close together, adjusting the tip position slightly each time so that the points of the stars interlock and cover the entire area without any gaps.

Curving Line:

- 45-degree angle at 3:00 (9:00)
 - Tip: lightly touching surface
1. Using a wavelike motion, draw tip steadily along surface, and at the same time squeeze it evenly.
 2. Stop squeezing; lift tip away.



Tight Zigzag:

1. Steadily squeeze and draw the tip along the surface in an up and down motion.
2. Using the same motion as you did for the curving line, shorten the distance from the peak of one wave to the peak of the next so there is no gap between them.



Drop Flower Tip:

- Practice sheet
 - Tip #2D (this tip is almost strictly used for flowers)
1. Position bag straight up and squeeze, keeping tip in icing until flower is the size you want.
 2. Stop pressure, pull tip up and to the side to help prevent points in the dots.



ACTIVITY 1

Activities help you practice decorating a cake for a special event. Try decorating three different times in the year and record each below.

1.

2.

3.

ACTIVITY 2

Practice stars, dots, flowers and borders. Put this paper under plastic and practice.

Lines:



Stars and Drop Flowers:



Dots:



ACTIVITY 3

Writing

Put this paper under plastic and practice writing.

4 - H

Practice writing here:

What to Exhibit

Cake Decorating

Choose one of the following

Option A: Display one decorated Styrofoam circle (9 inches in diameter by 3 inches tall) using any of the decorating skills you have practiced in this manual. **Your cake must have icing on the top and sides as well as a border on the top and bottom edges.** Cakes must be on a cake board strong enough to support the cake (approximately 3/8 inch thick) and 2-4 inches larger than the cake. For example, if the cake is 9 inches in diameter, then the cake board must be 11-13 inches in diameter. The cake board must be neatly covered and well taped or otherwise attached underneath.

Do not use candy for decorations.

Option B: Mini 4-H Cake Decorating Poster (Learning Journey)

Create a Mini 4-H poster that shows your child's learning journey as they practiced cake decorating. You may include:

- Photos of your child making icing
- Photos of them preparing the icing bag
- Pictures of practicing cake decorating skills
- Pictures and text highlighting the skills sheets from pages **15 & 16** of the manual (stars, drop flowers, lines, print, etc.)
- Any other practice work that shows what they learned

The goal is to highlight effort, learning, and progress.

Option C: Skills Sheet Display

If your child chooses this option instead of decorating a cake or creating a learning-journey poster, the goal is for them to practice and demonstrate basic cake decorating skills in a simple, low-stress way.

For this exhibit, your Mini 4-Her will create a skills poster using the Mini 4-H poster board (without a sleeve).

Using the icing described in the manual, have your child practice the skills shown in **Activities/Tips 2 & 3 on pages 15 and 16**, such as:

- Stars
- Drop flowers

- Lines
- Print/writing
- Other basic piping techniques

They will place these icing examples directly onto the poster to show what they learned.

Please make sure to attach the official Exhibit Tag to the poster before turning it in.

All projects must include: (both are found on page 19)

- Record Sheet
- Exhibit Tag

Place exhibit tag & record sheet in Ziploc bag or envelope and tape to the bottom of the cake board or in the bottom right corner of your poster, with the record sheet on the back

All food items will be discarded after the Fair unless you state on your record sheet that you want to keep your cake. We will keep your EXHIBIT TAG so you can have it for your 4-H Record book. You may pick up your exhibit tag and/or cake at Project Release.

NOTE: If you are unable to pick your project up on Project Release Day, please make arrangements to have it picked up. All projects must be removed from the exhibit building on that day. There is no available storage space for unclaimed projects.

Developed by Purdue Extension – Elkhart County
17746 County Road 34 Ste E, Goshen, IN 46528, 574-533-0554

**Elkhart County Mini 4-H Cake Decorating Manual
Updated December 2025**

Exhibit Tag:

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Mini 4-H | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | Cake Decorating |
| | Name | City | Grade | School | |

Record Sheet

----- **Cut here** -----

Name:

Grade:

I had fun with

What did I learn from this project?

If you created Option A or B, how did you decorate your cake?

Do you want your cake back after the fair (please circle one)?

Yes

No