

"This We Believe About Judging in the: 4-H Program"

Judging's Place in the 4-H program.

4-H is an educational program. Its goal is the growth and development of young people. Projects and activities are

- the method by which young people are challenged and learn. They are both means and ends. 4-Hers "Learn by Doing."
- Judging and being judged provides for learning by: making use of incentives and competition as teaching strategies, and as a strategy for helping young people understand and develop standards.
- 4-H judging has the elements of a "true" educational experience. It provides for the possibility of success for all by having categories for contestants in different stages of development. 4-H judging has fair rules that are understandable, defensible and applied by a good judge. It has real challenges with standards high enough to ensure "an earnest effort on the part of the contestant."

The process of judging is important.

- Judging process definitions:
 - Judge (noun) -A person qualified (has skill, knowledge and experience) to give an opinion or decide on the relative worth.
 - Judge (verb) -Involves action, to come to a conclusion by comparison or consideration.
 - Judging -Appraising or determining the merit of an exhibit on the basis of recognized standards, then making a decision and placing.
- Perceptions and understanding our own frame of reference is important in the judging process.
- Judging is a process involving: values, factual claims, judgements, decisions and actions.

The importance of standards.

- Standards are part of the learning experience provided by judging/exhibiting.
- Judging is done according to standards of excellence established by research and/or knowledgeable experts and not a matter of personal tastes or whims of the judge.
- Characteristics of educational standards are: high but attainable; stimulate youth to move ahead; appropriate to different age and skill levels; known by 4-H youth and volunteers.
- Criteria for establishing standards include: items should be useful or purposeful; qualities for the use or purpose should be established; the whole is more important than the parts; enable the judge to give reasons for choice or decision.
- Members should know qualities or standards. Standards can be learned from: project material, pictures, tours and trips; observations, check sheets, etc.

Communication to the 4-Her.

- Help youth recognize good points and those which are not so good according to the standards.
- It is not only what you say but, how you say it that is important. Judges should have an understanding of youth as well as, a knowledge of subject matter and acceptable standards. 4-H members recall and utilize judge's comments.

When tactfully presented, comments result in the satisfaction of knowing why the placing is made and when understood lead to the acceptance of the recommendations or standards.

- Comments may be oral or written and given to an individual or to a group. They should be appropriate for the situation/ encourage the member; help him/her understand what is well done; are kind; help youth see where improvements can be made; provide help in understanding how the placing was made; and, encourage youth to continue to learn and improve.
- Be pleasant and positive. Encouraging and criticizing requires tact and diplomacy. Encouragement is one of the most common incentives used in 4-H. It is often not easy and we need to recognize that encouraging words are not always perceived by the other person as a compliment. Think of encouragement as ways to say "good for you". Criticizing is often difficult to accept and is always difficult to give. A good method of criticizing is to place the criticism/suggestion within the context of positive comments.
- Be conscious of how you say what you say.
 - Be pleasant -smile
 - Be honest -mean it
 - Be positive -encourage

Responsibilities of a Judge.

- Prepare yourself. Study project criteria to become familiar with suggested exhibits, rules, etc. Be familiar with project manuals. Confer with Extension staff regarding special emphasis given during the year. Know the standards for the items being judged. Be professional in appearance and well groomed.
- As you judge: Take time to get a general picture of the class. Become thoroughly familiar with the exhibit. Make worthwhile comments. Make ribbon placings in relation to other exhibits in the same class and according to standards. Be consistent. Record ribbon placings. Be ready to justify placing.
- Judging ethics: Arrive on time. Don't be concerned about "who" has entered. Avoid letting personal likes and dislikes influence decision. Don't give top placings if exhibits are not worthy. Judge in areas in which you are qualified.
- Contribute to the educational objectives of the event by providing comments to the participants and volunteers.
- Contribute to the improvement of the show by making suggestions to Extension staff.

Assumptions we make regarding exhibits.

- We accept an exhibit as being one outcome of the members project or experience. Assume the member is right. Respect the 4-H member and expect she/he is honest.
- No exhibit or presentation is so poorly done to deny any encouraging comment.

Judging/exhibiting is a learning experience for youth.

- Judging/exhibiting provides youth the opportunity to: evaluate their progress; set standards for themselves; understand their capabilities; set goals for themselves and work toward those goals; broaden their knowledge; learn to express themselves; make use of feedback from knowledgeable people.