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## 4-H Recordbook Essentials

A 4-H recordbook is a member's annual record of growth and accomplishments. It is a historical record of the member's 4-H career. Participants record the projects they have been involved in, what they have learned, and how they have grown personally and in their knowledge. With recordbooks, the members can reflect on their entire 4-H careers even after they have left 4-H career.

Recordbooks are a part of the core life skill of record keeping, which should be taught in every 4-H project. Record keeping teaches responsibility, self-reflection, and accountability. If a project involves monetary transactions, keeping records also teaches basic bookkeeping skills. 4-H members who create recordbooks throughout their 4-H career have the skills to complete college, award, and scholarship applications.

Members should work on their recordbooks throughout the year; they will be evaluated at the county level in late June/early July. District recordbook judging competitions occur in July, and the state judging for senior 4-H members is in August.

Know your district judging date to give ample time for the members to edit and correct their recordbooks before the district judging.

### Basics

Recordbooks are divided into three levels of based on 4-H age. An online system ([www.4hreports.com](http://www.4hreports.com)) is available for 4-H members to document project activities, leadership, and community service, awards, and other 4-H project learning experiences.

- **Category:** 4-H members may select among 30 categories in which to enter a recordbook. FCS project categories are listed below. Although 4-H members may change categories each year, many stay with the category in which they are most active.
- **4-H story:** Part of the recordbook is the 4-H story, in which the member discusses highlights or points of interest that may not fit into the project report form. The story is a vital part of the recordbook because it helps the judges get to know the 4-H member.  
Stories can be written according to a theme or can be chronological histories of 4-H careers. The story should be personal, be written in first person, and express both the good and unfortunate events of the member's life. Recordbooks also include photos of members at work during their 4-H careers. The best photos are action shots of the members working with their projects, leading others, and helping in their communities.
- **Project experiences and participation:** Because 4-H members are usually very involved in their 4-H work, they need to limit the amount of information in their recordbooks. 4-H recordbooks cover up to four projects for up to the past 4 years. This means that a 4-H member who has been in a project for 7 or 8 years will include only information about the past 4 years of experiences. Members who have been in a new project for only 1 to 3 years will list all those years. This does not mean that a 4-H member must have four projects or be in all of them for at least 4 years.
- **Leadership:** Members record their experiences in leadership roles they have had—elected/appointed offices, volunteer roles, or promotional leadership at the club (local), county, district, state, national, and even the international level. The recordbook should include information about how being a leader helped others and what effect it had on the 4-H member.
- **Community service:** A recordbook should describe the number of community service projects that a member has been involved with, how many people benefited by the events, and the highlights of community service for the 4-H member.
- **Other 4-H projects:** Because many members are involved in more than four projects, the recordbook includes a section where they can demonstrate successes in other minor projects. Members who have been involved in only four projects are encouraged to list three of them in the first section, and the one in which they have been least involved in the Other Projects section.
- **Recognition and awards:** The recordbook highlights the most significant and special awards received during the years in 4-H.