

Contest Integrity Checklist

The Contest Integrity Checklist can be used with any project's designated contest to maintain the quality and integrity of the program. It can also help ensure that each participant is treated fairly.

Communicate that the project experience does not exist to serve the contest, but that the contest is a step in the youth development process.

Contest Integrity Checklist

- ☐ The contest has written rules, regulations, and guidelines.
- ☐ The appropriate task force has reviewed and approved the rules and guidelines.
- ☐ The rules and guidelines have been communicated and distributed to all participants at least 60 days before the contest.
- ☐ The contest officials have been informed of their duties and expectations at least 2 weeks before the contest.
- ☐ The contest judges and other officials have been notified consistently and effectively.
- ☐ All contest judges have received orientation and training.
- ☐ An unbiased panel of tabulators has compiled the contest results.
- ☐ The contest judges have signed the paperwork necessary to verify the results of the contest.
- ☐ Contest recognition was developed in accordance with the National 4-H Recognition Model.
- ☐ The contest was evaluated effectively. Participants have an avenue for giving praise and recommendations.

Contest Information Checklists

The following checklists may help you prepare information for 4-H contests. This will help ensure that each 4-H member receives adequate and consistent information.

Checklist: County information packet

- Contest details
- County contest logistics (date, time, location, etc.)
- Description of the categories/classes/divisions
- Entry deadline
- Entry forms
- Objectives of the contest
- Resource links
- Sample questions
- Sample scorecard for contest interview
- Tips for completing forms

Checklist: Letter to district participants

- 4-H Connect entry deadline
- Congratulations and encouragement
- Contest logistics (date, time, location)
- List of items to submit for complete entry
- Offer of assistance
- Paperwork deadline

Checklist: Letter to state participants

- 4-H Connect entry deadline
- Additional roundup opportunities
- Congratulations and encouragement
- Contest logistics (date, time, location)
- County-specific logistics
- List of items to submit for complete entry
- Offer of help
- Roundup lodging and transportation information
- *Texas 4-H Roundup Rules and Guidelines*

Checklist: Letter to judges

- Brief statement of contest objectives
- Contest logistics (date, time, location—include a map)
- Copy of entry paperwork for judges

Checklist: Judge orientation

- Welcome and express gratitude.
- Allow time for the judges to review the paperwork before the interviews start.
- Provide refreshments and/or a small gift.
- Review and explain the contest objectives.
- Review the rules (time limits, etc.).
- Review the suggestions for making comments on the judging scorecards (give feedback to reinforce or enhance learning and skill development).

Suggestions for Commenting on Judging Scorecards

Judges' comments on scorecards can be like air in a balloon. Good, positive, constructive comments can inflate the balloon; destructive, poorly worded comments can quickly deflate or even pop the balloon. Judges' comments can inflate or deflate a 4-H contestant's self-esteem and motivation.

Judges' comments can be the most meaningful part of the contest experience for contestants. A judge's words can mean much more than a score or a placing and can be remembered long after the show is over. Even years later, some former contestants remember specific comments a judge once made. In fact, sometimes the words said or written are remembered more than any other aspect of the contest.

Ideally, the judges' comments should make the participants feel special and rewarded, even if just for their effort to participate. The children should never go home feeling as if they got last place.

However, positive, constructive comments should not be sugar-coated or untruthful. They should be words of genuine encouragement and valuable suggestions for improvement. The true value of positive comments can often be found in how comments are said rather than just what is said. Good intentions can be easily misunderstood.

Even for the best entries, the judges need to point out at least one area that the participants could improve, especially if they are advancing to a higher level of competition.

As a judge, ask yourself if the words you write or say can be easily understood by a child. Be sure to describe clearly what you liked or what can be done to improve. When you make comments, consider the age and developmental stage of the participants. Also consider the resources available to that child. Not all children have the same opportunities and support.

Try to point out aspects specific to the child, the interview, or the paperwork, so that participants feel their presence is validated. Don't let kids feel that their effort didn't matter, or that they were indistinguishable in the mix. All children need to know that they were noticed, have potential, and have value.

When making comments on scorecards:

Try this... ..	Instead of.....
<p><i>You've made good progress in your project; I can see that you've learned a lot about _____.</i></p> <p>Be specific with comments. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Smart shopping</i> • <i>Gourmet cooking</i> • <i>Advanced sewing techniques</i> • <i>Creating a "green" home</i> • <i>Preventing skin cancer</i> 	<p>Leaving a section blank. If there are no comments on a scorecard, a 4-H member doesn't know what was done well or what could be improved.</p>
<p><i>I really liked the way you _____.</i></p> <p>Fill in the blank with something specific. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Presented your dish</i> • <i>Explained your reasons for purchasing this item instead of the others</i> • <i>Used research-based materials in your presentation</i> • <i>Made eye contact during your presentation</i> 	<p>Offering praise and encouragement such as "Good job!" "Great work!" or "Way to go!" but not letting the 4-H members know what specifically they did well.</p>
<p><i>Continue to explore different styles to find the most flattering looks for you.</i></p> <p><i>Practice projecting a strong speaking voice.</i></p> <p>Evaluate the product or presentation, not the person. Focus on the 4-H members' work, not their personal traits.</p>	<p><i>You should lose some weight if you want to wear that style.</i></p> <p><i>Your voice is too high-pitched for public speaking.</i></p> <p>Making personal criticisms of the 4-H member, especially of things that are difficult to change.</p>

Try this... ..	Instead of.....
<i>Think about adding accessories in the same color family to tie the look together.</i>	<i>Your shoes are too flashy.</i>
Allow the participants to express their personal tastes and current trends. Keep current trends in mind.	Expressing personal bias toward dress and hairstyles.
<i>I know how hard it is to speak in front of an audience. Practice giving your demonstration in front of people whenever you can to gain confidence.</i>	<i>Don't be clumsy.</i>
Offer suggestions for improving their skills.	Highlighting the things the 4-H member did wrong.
<i>Remember that garnish adds to the attractiveness of a dish.</i>	<i>Always garnish your dish with parsley.</i>
<i>Accessories add to an outfit and make it look complete. Consider how the accessories that you choose affect the look of your outfit.</i>	<i>Never wear pearls with jeans.</i>
	Using <i>always</i> and <i>never</i> ; there are often legitimate exceptions.
<i>Your presentation followed an easy-to-understand outline. View your visual aids from a distance to make sure they can be read. Great job tying the main points together in the conclusion.</i>	<i>Your presentation was too long. You gave too many examples. Your visual aids need larger type.</i>
Give praise as well as criticism. Try to “sandwich” suggestions between praise and positive comments.	Focusing on the negative.
<i>I was concerned when you said _____. I worried that you didn't want to be in the project and you were only doing it because your mom made you.</i>	<i>I can't believe you said that!</i>
If you are concerned about something, be specific. They may not have realized what they said or did.	Leaving them guessing about what they said.
<i>You can improve your presentation by:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding more detail to your answers • Using larger print on your slides/posters • Using research-based resources 	<i>NO, NO, NO!</i>
If something was done incorrectly, be specific and give concrete solutions to problems you see.	Just saying that the 4-H'er is wrong.



Tips for Improving Contest Record Forms and Interviews

These tips for producing high-quality project record forms (paperwork) and presenting outstanding interviews are only suggestions, not rules or requirements.

The paperwork should be neat, readable, and complete. Forms may be reproduced on the computer if similar font sizes and spacing are used.

Remember, the small differences, additions, and details are what move the paperwork from ordinary to outstanding. There is no substitute for high-quality project work, but excellent paperwork is essential for illustrating your experiences in the project.

Keep in mind that unless your writing is complete and specific about what you've done, those who read it will not know the amount of hard work you've put into your project. In some ways you want to try to "think" for the person reading your paperwork. The more detailed the report is, the easier it is for the reader to see what you've done.

A large part of your total contest score is based on the paperwork alone. It should reinforce the information that you present in your interview. The time it takes to produce good paperwork is worth the effort for your competition as well as your own personal benefit.

- If at all possible, *type* your paperwork. Forms are sometimes available online in a "fillable" format.
- **Be unique.** Let your personality shine through. Show what sets you apart from the crowd.
- Organize your paperwork well. Your paperwork should "flow." You don't want it to be so complicated that even you get confused, but you do want to include important details. Use an organization technique that is easy for you to follow. There is no one correct way. Ask others to check your paperwork to see if they can follow it, too.
- Try to fill in all blanks on the form as much as possible. For beginners, this may mean telling a story using complete sentences. Those who have a lot of information to include may choose to use more bulleted statements.
- Make sure that the information is correct and fairly detailed. Never be dishonest, but try to get as much "mileage" from each activity as possible. Different components of an activity can be reported in different areas of the forms.

For example, in a project meeting, you might learn several concepts with two or three activities. So instead of just writing attended project meeting:

- ✧ Add *participated in garnishing demonstration* or *helped with cleanup* in the project activities section
- ✧ And include *learned to make radish roses, learned that the history of garnishing plates with parsley came from using parsley as an after-meal breath freshener, and learned the importance of storing food in the refrigerator within 2 hours of use to prevent bacterial growth* in the knowledge and skills section.
- Complete sentences are not necessary. Use a symbol (for example, * or –) to begin each new thought in a list. One exception is the project summary, where complete sentences will help to tell your ending "story."
- **Project goals** should relate to the objectives of the project. The goals in the record form are yours, so make them your own. Ask yourself, "What do I want to learn?" Your answers lead you to your goals.
- The project summary should reflect the completion of your goals. Did you do what you wanted to do, and learn what you wanted to learn? If so, how did you do it? If not, what changed, and why? In this section include general comments about your project experience. Readers will enjoy the summary even more if it is a little story about your project that starts with an "attention getter" and has a theme throughout the paragraph.
- Answer questions the reader might have about what you are reporting (such as who was involved, what you did, and where and how you did it). Also, spell out any acronyms such as FCS. You may know what they mean, but not everyone will.
- Use numbers wherever you can (such as the number of hours you spent in an activity, and the number of people you led or who were involved). Add up those numbers at the end of each section and include a grand total if you can. Again, it helps the reader understand what you've done.
- Include as much as possible about your leadership and community service. If you don't get a chance to lead or serve the community with a group, start your own activities and relate these to the project area. For example, include that you took a leadership role in a project workshop (food workshops go on the food show forms, and clothing workshops go on the fashion show forms). Or, for community service, write that you donated to a campaign to help the needy (for example, a canned food drive for the food show or a coat drive for the fashion show).

- Answer the questions on the forms thoroughly and include what you've learned in the category you've entered (such as everyday living, refashion, semiformal to formal, and theater/costume in clothing construction, or dairy, fruits and vegetables, grains, and protein in the food show). If you're in the "everyday living" category of the fashion show, your answers should make it obvious that your garment was chosen for and will be used as an everyday living outfit. If your category in the food show is Grains, your knowledge and skills should reflect the concepts you learned about grains.
- **Knowledge and skills** are specific things you've learned from your project activities. Connect them to your goals and the project objectives. Make specific statements (instead of "learned about fiber," say "learned that polyester is one of the most versatile fibers made because it can imitate several other fibers"). Also, show how you've grown by reporting something you did to build on what you did last year or something you've never tried before.
- **Project activities** are what you did to gain your knowledge and skills. They should also be specific and show growth. Use numbers where you can (such as the number of workshops attended, number of articles read, and number of fashion shows participated in).
Project activities can include a variety of things related to the project, such as meetings, workshops, and community service.
But the activities can also be self-directed. For example, in a clothing project, you might include reading magazine articles about fashion trends; watching videos about the fashion industry; watching TV shows like *What Not to Wear*, *America's Next Top Model*, *Project Runway*, or sewing shows; interviewing clothing store owners or workers; conducting Internet research, etc.
In a food project you might include trying new recipes; reading magazine articles or books about restaurants, cooking techniques, or careers in the food industry; watching cooking shows on TV such as *Hell's Kitchen*, *Iron Chef*, or *Everyday with Rachael Ray*; viewing food safety videos; or conducting Internet research. Don't limit yourself—the possibilities are endless. Just remember to note something you learned from those activities in the knowledge and skills section.
- Think of the **project summary** as a story that tells about your project for the year. Start with an "attention getter" that relates to your project and then talk about what you've done and learned.
Don't repeat the information that is in other parts of the form, but instead describe how what you have done or learned affects you or has made your life better. Also describe how you will use what you have learned.
Mention how you accomplished the goals you listed at the beginning of the form. The summary is a good place to be personal, since the rest of the information is pretty much just factual.
- **In the fashion show:** Make sure you know the difference between fiber and fabric. Cotton is a fiber. Jersey, denim, and velvet are fabrics made from cotton. Those fabrics may also be made from other fibers such as polyester. Some of your best sources of this information are books, brochures, and the Internet. Learn the specific care requirements for the fibers and fabrics also.
- **In the fashion show:** Use specific terms to describe your garment design (such as empire waistline, princess seams, notched collar, Florentine neckline, flared skirt, straight skirt, palazzo pants, capped sleeves, set-in sleeves, and sheath dress).
Also use specific terms for construction techniques such as reinforced seams, finished seams, tailored, French seams, rolled hem, and double-stitched details. To find these terms, look in books, brochures, and catalogues about fashion.
- **In the food show:** Learn specifics about the food and food category you enter in the show. For example: If you enter the fruits and vegetables category, find out general information and characteristics of fruits and vegetables. What nutrients does that food group provide, and what do those nutrients do for your body? Why is it important to include these foods in a balanced diet? What are the preparation principles in the dish? Why do certain actions make the recipe turn out right, and what does each ingredient do for the recipe? These ideas should be reflected (just briefly) in one or all of three places: knowledge and skills, project activities, and project summary.