

## Creating A Positive Experience for 4-H Youth at the County Fair

Thank you for agreeing to judge the 4-H division of our county fair. Judging is a vital part of the county fair educational process. As a judge, you are part of a teaching team of volunteer leaders, parents and Extension staff. You are the link between the 4-H project, the 4-H member and a standard of performance.

Four important words in judging philosophy: Fair, Firm, Friendly, and Consistent.

The evaluation of an exhibit should be a positive and exciting part of the total 4-H experience. We appreciate your efforts in providing the best experience possible. You're helping support and reinforce the learning that occurs during the project year. The exhibit is not an end in itself, nor does it illustrate all of the learning that has taken place during the 4-H year.

Please take a time to review the information provided to help "make the best better" for our youth during this year's fair.



### Focus on Youth

Suggestions to help you focus the judging process on youth.

- Youth development is the purpose of 4-H project work.
- Judge the exhibit - - not the child.

Interact with the child whenever possible through conference judging. Discuss the standards you are using, the rationale for your standards, and the relation the standards you are using has to real life participation. Explain the value (weight) you are placing on various aspects of the project display.

Judge the exhibit as an illustration of a 4-H member's achievements toward project goals and objectives. Based on county rules, a judge may want to discuss with a 4-H member his/her understanding of the project goals, objectives, activities, and exhibit development.

Recognize the developmental levels of children. Comment on the achievements and successes of the child, taking into account the developmental ability of a young person at a certain age.

### Award the Ribbon That Is Earned

It's important that the appropriate ribbon be awarded to the participant based on the evaluation of the exhibit using an accepted standard or scorecard.

#### *What are Standards?*

The standards of excellence are printed on a judge's score sheet. Ideally, standards are derived from research - primarily from land-grant universities - and are the same standards used by adults. Avoid using personal preferences.

Be familiar with the standard or scorecard that you will be using while judging.

Standards should not be changed because of problems or situations with which the 4-H'er lives and works.

**Judging essentials: a standard score card, positive, constructive, and relevant comments, whenever possible, use conference judging to discuss the exhibit with the 4-H member.**



### ***Danish System***

- \*All exhibits receive a ribbon
- \*Exhibits are judged in comparison with an ideal standard, not to each other
- \*Exhibits are placed in 4 ribbon groups ~ Purple, Blue, Red, or White
  - PURPLE: Outstanding on all standards
  - BLUE: Exceeds the minimum standard; may have minor flaws where improvements can be made
  - RED: Meets all minimum standards; may be visible signs of needed improvements
  - WHITE: Fails to meet minimum standards

### ***Modified Danish System***

Exhibits are compared to a standard, placed in four-color ribbon groups, but are ranked top to bottom within each ribbon group.

### ***American System***

Not all exhibits may receive a ribbon. Exhibits are ranked 1-2-3, etc. with a different colored ribbon for each placing. Exhibits are compared to each other.

### **Provide Appropriate Feedback**

Interact with the child whenever possible through conference judging. During conference judging try to put the 4-H member at ease. Sit beside the member. Introduce yourself and generally explain the procedure and purpose of conference judging. Encourage the 4-H member to ask questions and discuss their exhibit. Avoid questions that can be answered yes or no. Help the member to feel proud of their accomplishments. Explain to the 4-H member why they received the ribbon placement.

### ***Sandwich Method of Providing Feedback***

1. Start with two positives.
2. Discuss one way to improve.
3. Add another positive.
4. End with a one or two word descriptor, (define the 4-H'ers capabilities).

### ***An example using the Sandwich Method:***

1. ☼ Juan, the wood you selected for your jewelry box has a nice, even grain that adds to the overall design.  
☼ Your choice of finish is attractive and durable.
2. ☼ Your lid could close more evenly. What do you think the problem is?
3. ☼ The lining you have used adds to the overall appearance and will protect the jewelry.
4. ☼ Juan you are a skilled wood finisher.

### ***Positive Comments to use:***

- ☞ I like how you...
- ☞ I can tell you enjoyed this because...
- ☞ You handled \_\_\_\_\_ very well.
- ☞ I can tell you learned a new skill by how....
- ☞ You should feel proud because.....
- ☞ You did a wonderful job of following the project standards by....

### ***Constructive Comments to use:***

- ☞ The next time you might....
- ☞ Some other ideas to try....
- ☞ It would be helpful if.....
- ☞ It may be helpful to practice \_\_\_\_\_ before you do this again.
- ☞ As you work on a \_\_\_\_\_ an important thing to remember is.....

### ***Sample questions to ask:***

- ☞ Tell me about how you selected this particular exhibit to compete this year for fair.
- ☞ What was your favorite part of this exhibit?
- ☞ What was the most important thing you learned?
- ☞ If you had the chance to do this exhibit again, what would you change?
- ☞ How did you choose \_\_\_\_\_ for your exhibit?
- ☞ Where did you learn how to \_\_\_\_\_?
- ☞ Tell me more about \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☞ What part was the most difficult?
- ☞ What was the easiest?
- ☞ How will you use what you learned next time?

*Information compiled by Diane Mack, 4-H Youth Development Specialist, K-State Research and Extension.*