



California 4-H Project Sheet Series



Communications



Photo: Nate W. Caeton

Learning to communicate effectively is a key life skill that applies to all areas of day-to-day life. Talking with friends and family, giving a speech at school, posting on social media platforms, telling an engaging story, and navigating conflicts with others are just a few examples of how we use our communication skills. Communication projects help youth learn about written, visual, oral, and nonverbal communication techniques in both formal and nonformal settings.

By the end of the project, members will

- know how to organize and present information
- understand what active listening is and how to engage in it
- be able to tailor their communication method and style to different types of audiences

Project levels

Starting Out: Beginner

- Learn about different styles of communication (such as verbal or nonverbal, visual or dominant, influencer, conscientious, or steady) and identify your preferred styles.

- Create a series of posters or PowerPoint slides that tell a story.
- Write formal thank-you letters to friends and family.
- Learn safe social media habits and practices.
- Practice nonverbal communication by playing charades or a similar game.

Learning more: Intermediate

- Practice conflict resolution, especially with people who have a different preferred communication style.
- Give a 4-H demonstration that uses props and visual aids in addition to a prepared verbal speech.
- Write a news article for your 4-H newsletter, school paper, or a local online news site.
- Get involved with National 4-H's social media campaigns, 4-h.org/sharing-is-daring/, by sharing badges and commenting on @4-H posts.
- Record yourself giving a short speech and review the footage for unintentional nonverbal cues, such as posture and eye contact.

Exploring Depth: Advanced

- Watch other project members give their presentations and give constructive criticism and feedback.
- Present a prepared, persuasive speech on a topic you have thoroughly researched.
- Write a short story or collection of poems and share them with the rest of the project members.
- Work with a 4-H club or project leader to create a social media account for their group.
- Participate in a mock job interview, including creating a resume and cover letter.

Note: The activities above are ideas to help inspire further project development. This is not a complete list.

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Expand your experiences!

Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)

- Choose a natural process, such as the water cycle or photosynthesis, and create an informational poster explaining how it works.
- Help your county 4-H office promote the annual 4-H STEM Challenge, 4-h.org/programs/stem-challenge/, via flyers, newsletter announcements, email blasts, and social media posts using the branding package provided by National 4-H.
- Learn about “augmented reality” technology by creating an Instagram filter using Spark’s free augmented-reality app, spark.meta.com/%20.

Healthy living

- Create a presentation about social media safety and present it at your school or 4-H club.
- Write a cookbook containing all the healthy recipes from your county’s 4-H cooking and/or nutrition events.
- Lead conflict resolution workshops at a 4-H Youth Summit, ucanr.edu/sites/4-HYouthSummits/.

Civic engagement

- Volunteer to create and distribute publicity for a community event.

- Create a display about your club or favorite 4-H project for National 4-H Week during the first week of October.
- Learn about the 4-H Youth in Action Awards, 4-h.org/parents/4-h-youth-in-action-awards/, and how the winners use their 4-H stories to promote agriculture, civic engagement, healthy living, and leadership in their communities.

Leadership

- Plan, prepare, and present a presentation about leadership styles at a 4-H presentation day.
- Offer to mentor new 4-H members once you have completed this project. Maybe even become a junior or teen leader for the group!
- Direct a school play or other youth production.

College and career readiness

- Visit your local newspaper and interview one of the journalists about their job and what skills it requires.
- Take high school or college courses in public speaking, drama, communications, journalism, or other related fields.
- Practice your job interview skills by participating in the Interview Contest, na.eventscloud.com/website/55508/interview-contest/, at State Field Day, na.eventscloud.com/website/55508/home/.

Enhancing participation

Connections and events

- **Presentation days:** Share what you have learned with others through a presentation.
- **County and state fairs:** Many fairs welcome displays and presentations from 4-H members about the projects they have entered.
- **Field days:** At these events, 4-H members may participate in a variety of contests related to their project area. Contact your county 4-H office to determine additional opportunities, such as county matches or resource fairs.

4-H record book

- 4-H record books, sites.google.com/ucdavis.edu/ca4h-resourcecenter/4-h-basics/record-books, give members an opportunity to record events and reflect on their

experiences. For each project, members document their experiences, learning, and development.

- 4-H record books also teach members record management skills and encourage them to set goals and develop a plan to meet those goals.

*Available at shop4-h.org.

Materials for delivery

Curricula

- Finding your voice: Public speaking made easy*
- Communications curriculum—beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels*
- UC 4-H presentation manual, ucanr.edu/sites/UC4-H/files/2193.pdf





Resources

- California 4-H public speaking webpage, 4h.ucanr.edu/Projects/Leadership/PublicSpeaking/
- California 4-H guidelines for social media, 4h.ucanr.edu/files/133821.pdf
- Communications: Pieces to a presentation puzzle—Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, store.extension.iastate.edu/product/571
- Score with your posters—Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, extension.iastate.edu/4hfiles/statefair/EEHandbook/EEHScoreWithYourPosters.pdf
- Toastmasters International, toastmasters.org/
- TED Talks, ted.com/talks

Note: The UC 4-H Youth Development Program does not endorse, warrant, or otherwise take responsibility for the contents of unofficial sites.

What did my 4-H members learn?

Sometimes what our youth members actually learn is different from what we intend for them to learn. Do some of these activities to check on how your project is going!

1. Clover diagrams: Print out blank 4-H clovers and have the members label them with the 4 “H’s.” Ask them to write how they will apply what they learned in the project to each “H”. For example, they could write “I learned to care for the hungry through our food-bank service project” under Heart.
2. Muddiest point: At the end of the meeting ask each member to write down one thing you covered that they do not fully understand yet.
3. Plus/delta sheets: You can do this on your own as a leader reflection or with your whole group after a meeting or activity. Make two columns on a sheet of paper and label one with a “+” and one with a “Δ”. Write down everything that went well under “+” and what should be changed for next time under “Δ”.
4. Quiz games: Check content knowledge with a round of Jeopardy or another fun quiz!

4-H thriving model of positive youth development

Youth thrive when 4-H programs are done well. It is important to ensure, no matter what project or activities are offered, that the program context matters. Ensuring a foundation for youth engagement starts with a focus on the three categories outlined below.

Facilitating youth sparks

A spark is something youth are passionate about; it really fires them up and gives them joy and energy. Youth use their sparks to make the world a better place.

- Sparks create action and provide fuel for growth in knowledge and skills.
- Sparks grow a young person’s networks.

Help youth find how this project may bring them joy, purpose, and direction.

To learn more, visit tinyurl.com/y2lwct7u.

Program quality

Research shows that youth programs must be done well if they are to make a positive difference in the lives of youth.

Quality programs ensure

- physical and psychological safety
- appropriate structure
- supportive relationships
- opportunities to belong
- positive social norms
- support for mattering
- opportunities for skill-building
- integration of family, school, and community

To learn more, visit tinyurl.com/yxg27m3j.

Fostering developmental relationships

Caring, supportive adults are clearly connected to positive youth development.

Across the childhood years, youth need different things from adults as they learn, grow, and self-regulate. What should remain constant from all adult volunteers and staff includes

- expressing care through listening, warmth, and dependability
- challenging growth by expecting youth to do their best
- providing support
- sharing power
- expanding possibilities

To learn more, visit tinyurl.com/y6434ntw.



Experiential learning/Learn-by-doing

Well-executed 4-H programs provide learning opportunities that are direct and hands-on; invite discussion; involve active reflection; and make connections between activities and the real world.

Experiential learning

Facilitate learning experiences through a three-part cycle:

1. **Experience:** Hands-on experience offer youth opportunities to move around and handle materials, which engage them in investigations, observations, experiments, or scenarios.
2. **Reflection:** Seamless movement through three distinct phases whereby the facilitator guides the learners to share thoughts and feelings with others in order to process and generalize their experiences, using broad questions that invite interaction.
3. **Application:** An opportunity for learners to apply new knowledge to authentic situations in order to help deepen and extend their understanding.

Active learning

In 4-H projects, youth need to be involved in active learning where they plan, explore, build, and work with minimal instruction from the volunteer. Youth need to seek their own answers to questions rather than being given answers. When using active learning, youth will be engaged in the following activities:

- asking questions and defining problems
- developing and using models
- planning and carrying out investigations
- using simple equipment or tools to gather data
- analyzing and interpreting data
- using math and computational thinking
- constructing explanations and designing solutions
- engaging in argumentation from evidence
- obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information

Extend the learning

Extend learning through a variety of leadership, field-day, presentation, and record-keeping activities.

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