

Interview Judging



The Extension 4-H Youth Development program is based on the idea that the development of each individual youth who participates in the program is more important than the objects he or she makes.

Interview judging of 4-H projects is a process that greatly enhances the 4-H evaluation experience. The process involves a caring judge interviewing the 4-H member about his or her 4-H project. Interview judging gives 4-H members a sense of personal involvement and helps make project work more educational.

Evaluation of the exhibit is done by the 4-H member and judge together. Basing their decisions on the project goals of the 4-H member and the general standards for the exhibit item, they decide how much progress has been made and what ribbon the exhibit will receive. Each 4-H member can explain his or her starting point, take note of the progress he or she has made and explain his or her future plans.

Some of the benefits to the 4-H member are improved communication skills, recognition of his or her personal success and progress, encouragement to try new ideas and learning from the experience of the judge. The benefits to the judge are helping the member feel good about the project and finding out what the member wanted to achieve while providing a learning experience for the youth.

When the 4-H judge is successful, the evaluation of the 4-H project for the member becomes a positive and exciting part of the total 4-H experience. However, when judging is technically correct for the subject but inappropriate in terms of youth development, it can be harmful to the 4-H member. This can occur in static or the interview judging process.

Consequently, the judge's role, the leader's role, the parent's role and the member's understanding of a judging philosophy are essential.

Steps in interview judging of articles made for exhibit for 4-H

1. The 4-H member takes his or her exhibit to the judge. (To eliminate long waits at the judging place, a schedule may be set up so individuals or groups have a specific time for their interviews.)
2. The 4-H member and judge sit down together to discuss the article. Make arrangements for the judge and the 4-H member to meet where they can talk freely without interference from others. The success of the conference depends on the judge's ability to relate to the 4-H member. The judge needs to be open-minded and willing and able to listen, know what was being taught, and be able to recognize the 4-H member's ability level.
3. The judge establishes rapport with the 4-H member. The judge takes the initiative by setting a pleasant tone, saying something to convey friendliness and sincerity at the onset, perhaps complimenting the project or making casual conversation to put the 4-H member at ease. Try to make the interview friendly rather than intimidating.

4. The judge and the 4-H member discuss and evaluate the article. Both participants share in the evaluation by discussing the strong and weak points of the article. A score sheet can be helpful for the evaluation process. Start anywhere on the sheet that seems natural. The judge may offer observations and suggestions and point out things the 4-H member has missed by asking specific questions. Begin the conference on a positive note, talking first about the good qualities of the article, giving the 4-H member an opportunity to express his or her feelings of satisfaction about the work. Then ask a leading question that will give the 4-H member a chance to talk about particular problems. Usually the 4-H member will be aware of the problems. The role of the judge is to listen and help the 4-H member explore possible solutions. Consider those things the 4-H member can do to improve the article under discussion. If needed, make suggestions for the future. Help the 4-H member make a plan for a future course of action.
5. Based on the interview and input from the 4-H member, the judge decides on a placing, the judge explains the reasons for the placing and invites the 4-H member to add comments. If a scorecard is used and the two do not agree or cannot agree to compromise on an item on the scorecard, the check will go where the judge feels it belongs.
6. The judge suggests ideas for improvement. The judge ends the evaluation by encouraging the 4-H member's future work and participation.
7. The 4-H member may pin the ribbon to the article if the procedure fits the plan made for the exhibit.

Points to follow when you're the judge

1. Interact with the youth whenever possible and discuss your observations and judging philosophy. Explain the value you place on various aspects of the project and why some parts of the exhibit are more important than other parts.
2. Remember that positive youth development is the purpose of project work.
3. Comment on achievement and success of the youth's work, not the youth.
4. Judge the project and the youth's work, no matter how small.
5. Be familiar with the total 4-H project, goals, purposes, objectives, activities and materials.
6. Be familiar with the guidelines established for the exhibit by the county/state.
7. Avoid personal preferences. Develop and use standards regarding the exhibit. A standard is the criterion a judge uses to evaluate a product, skill or behavior.
8. Evaluate the efforts of the 4-H member by recognizing stronger points/abilities demonstrated, as well as weaker points. Help the 4-H member realize his or her opportunity to grow through project participation.
9. Judge the exhibit as an illustration of a 4-H member's achievements toward project goals and objectives.
10. Recognize the developmental level of the different ages of the youth you interview.
11. Use positive, constructive and meaningful comments (written or oral).
12. Remember four important words in judging philosophy – fair, firm, friendly and consistent – when working with 4-H members. Keep in mind the total development of the youth, the purpose of the 4-H program and the standards for judging the article.

Visit North Dakota 4-H online at www.ndsu.edu/4h

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