

# 4-H Member's Handbook



  
**MISSISSIPPI STATE**  
UNIVERSITY™  
EXTENSION



**4-H PLEDGE**

I pledge:

- My Head to clearer thinking
- My Heart to greater loyalty
- My Hands to larger service and
- My Health to better living, for my Club,  
my Community, my Country, and my World.

**4-H SLOGAN**

Learn by Doing

**4-H MOTTO**

To Make the Best Better



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Form 626 (2500-11-13)





## Welcome to 4-H!

As a 4-H member, you are a part of one of the largest youth programs in the world. Through 4-H, you will meet new friends, learn new skills, travel, and have fun!

## Pledge

I pledge:

My **head** to clearer thinking

My **heart** to greater loyalty

My **hands** to larger service

My **health** to better living

for my club, my community,

my country, and my world.

## Motto

To make the best better

## Slogan

Learn by doing

## Colors

Green and white

- Green—Nature's most common color is symbolic of springtime, life, and youth.
- White— This symbolizes purity and high ideals.

# I Pledge:



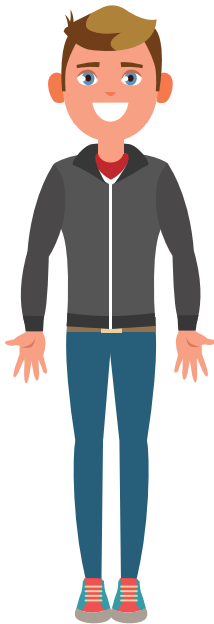
**My Head to  
Clearer Thinking**

(Right hand  
touches forehead)



**My Heart to  
Greater Loyalty**

(Right hand  
over heart)



**My Hands to  
Larger Service**

(Arms slightly  
bent, palms up)



**and My Health  
to Better Living**

(Arms at sides)

**For My Club, My Community, My Country, and My World**

## Creed

I believe in 4-H club work for the opportunity it gives me to become a useful citizen.

I believe in the training of my **head** for the power it will give me to think, plan, and reason.

I believe in the training of my **heart** for the nobleness it will give me to be kind, sympathetic, and true.

I believe in the training of my **hands** for the ability it will give me to be helpful, skillful, and useful.

I believe in the training of my **health** for the strength it will give me to enjoy life, resist disease, and work efficiently.

I believe in my country, my state, my community, and in my responsibility for their development. In all these things I believe, and I am willing to dedicate my efforts to their fulfillment.

## What is 4-H?

4-H'ers learn by doing in this informal, practical educational program. 4-H is for young people ages 5 to 18, from rural and urban areas, and from all racial, cultural, economic, and social backgrounds. 4-H helps you set goals, and it can help you learn how to be a good citizen. And you have fun in the process! In 4-H, you learn to solve problems facing you and your community. The knowledge and skills you acquire in 4-H can open the door to a lifetime of personal growth. 4-H is the youth program of the Mississippi State University Extension Service.







## What is the 4-H emblem?

The 4-H emblem is a four-leaf clover with an *H* on each leaf. The letters in the emblem stand for **head**, **heart**, **hands**, and **health**—the foundation of all 4-H programs:

Use your **head** to think, make decisions, understand why, and gain new and valuable knowledge in many areas.

The **heart** involves concern with the welfare of others, accepting the responsibilities of citizenship, determining your values and attitudes, and learning how to work and live with others at home; in your community, state, and nation; and around the world.

Use your **hands** to learn new skills, to perfect skills you already know, and to explore possible vocations and careers.

**Health** involves practicing healthy living, protecting the well-being of yourself and others, and making constructive use of your leisure time.

Although every 4-H club or program is different, the four essential elements are common to all. As a member of your local 4-H club, you will experience a sense of belonging. You will be cared for and accepted not only by other 4-H members, but also by 4-H adult volunteers and your local county Extension staff. You will be mastering new knowledge and developing new skills when you work on 4-H projects designed to help you improve yourself rather than compare yourself to others.

Your 4-H membership will also give you the opportunity to connect with your community and give back to others. As you practice generosity, you will develop a greater sense of compassion and appreciation of differences. While working on your 4-H projects and with your 4-H club, you will practice personal responsibility and discipline, allowing you to influence people and events through your decisions and actions, providing you a sense of independence.



## How do you become a part of 4-H?

**Join a 4-H club.** Members select one or more projects, elect officers, and plan and implement a program for the year or several months. All the members may enroll in the same project (a project club) or in a variety of projects (general club). You can find 4-H clubs in communities and schools.

**Take part in a special-interest group.** In a special-interest group, members learn about one subject during one or several meetings.

**Take part in a school enrichment project.** Members participate in a 4-H program that enriches or enhances a subject taught by the teacher during school time.

**Enroll as an individual member.** You may participate in individual 4-H projects even if you are not a member of a local 4-H group.

## How old do you have to be to enroll in 4-H?

There are three levels of membership within the Mississippi 4-H program:

- Cloverbuds 4-H is offered in some counties for children ages 5 through 7. Cloverbuds participate in special programming and non-competitive events.
- Primary 4-H membership is open to people ages 8 through 18. For specific rules on projects and competitive participation by each group, refer to the 4-H Project Enrollment Guide (P1447). The age for regular 4-H membership is determined by your age on January 1 of the current year.
- Collegiate 4-H is open to all 4-H members when they enter institutions of higher learning at land-grant institutions (Collegiate 4-H Programs, 2017).







## I have a disability; can I still participate?

Absolutely! Understand that your Extension agent will assume that you can do something until you tell them you need help. We encourage parent(s) or caregiver(s) to provide advocacy support. If you need to request an accommodation related to a disability, contact your Extension agent.

## Who are 4-H volunteers?

Adults and young people serve as volunteers in the 4-H program. Registered volunteers help plan and conduct 4-H projects and activities. Others serve as leaders of 4-H clubs. Indirect volunteers might serve on the advisory board or donate to your 4-H club, but they do not actively work with youth.





## What are 4-H projects?

Each 4-H member may enroll in one or more 4-H projects. 4-H projects are “learn by doing” experiences. You should select a project you are interested in and would like to learn about. You work on your projects throughout the year, keep records of what you do and learn, and then turn your records in to your project leader or 4-H club leader. You may enroll in the same project or a different project each year.

Before you select your 4-H project, talk with your parents or guardian and club leader. Your 4-H project book will present information about how and what you should do to complete the project. You have completed your project for the year when you have met your project goals.

## What kind of awards do you receive?

The MSU Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development rewards youth for the effort put forth in their projects. Different-colored ribbons signify award levels, and each award level may have more than one recipient.

- A blue ribbon indicates an excellent project that exceeds the average standard.

- A red ribbon indicates an average or slightly below-average project that meets expectations but has several mistakes or errors.
- A white ribbon indicates a below-average project that does not meet expectations or is less than expected.

There are other ribbons used in 4-H, such as the Cloverbud and Cloverleaf ribbons. Some specialists use certificates rather than ribbons because certificates are easier for a 4-H'er to include in their annual record book. It is important to check with your subject-matter specialist for an overall breakdown of the award structure in that programmatic area.

## May I wear 4-H pins, clothes, and other novelties?

As a 4-H member, you are entitled to wear the official 4-H member pin and other 4-H clothing items available from the National 4-H Council. For more information, contact your volunteer leader or Extension agent.



## What do I wear to a 4-H event?

We want to make a positive impression for 4-H at all times, so appropriate dress is critical. Green and white clothing or clothing displaying the 4-H emblem is encouraged at all functions.

### *Casual*

- Jeans, khakis
- T-shirts
- Athletic shoes
- No cut-off or worn jeans or pants with holes or ragged edges

### *Snappy casual*

- Slacks (jeans or khakis are appropriate)
- Shirts without ties
- Dress shoes or boots
- Skirts
- Appropriate blouse or shirt
- Dress denim (denim skirts and jeans)
- No shorts or flip flops
- No baseball caps

### *4-H attire*

- White shirt with collar, long sleeve preferred
- Green tie or bow
- Khaki or black pants
- Green 4-H jacket (awarded to 4-H Ambassadors and Leadership Team members)



### *Professional*

- Dress slacks, shirt and tie, jacket
- Suits with skirts or dress slacks, blouses
- Dresses
- Dress shoes or boots
- No denim clothing or athletic shoes

### *Formal*

- Suits with ties
- Formal or banquet attire
- Dress shoes, sandals as appropriate
- No backless, low-cut, or exposed-midriff dresses

### *Items that are inappropriate for any 4-H event or activity*

- Shorts more than 4 inches above the knee
- Holes in clothing (shirts or pants/shorts)
- Spaghetti, halter, muscle, cut-off, or tube tops
- Pajamas
- Low-cut pants or shirts
- Offensive or inappropriate language, graphics, or logos

Source: University of Florida IFAS Extension



## What leadership opportunities does 4-H offer?

The County 4-H Club Council is an organization made up of representatives of each 4-H club in the county. The purpose of the County 4-H Club Council is to promote 4-H projects and activities and to provide 4-H'ers an opportunity to serve at the county level. Members of the County 4-H Club Council learn to improve their leadership skills.

In the 4-H Leadership Project, members discover ways to carry out different leadership roles, such as club officer, committee member, Junior Leader, and Teen Leader. The 4-H Leadership Project is open to 4-H members of any age:

- A Junior Leader is a 4-H member who serves as an assistant or helper to an adult or Teen Leader.
- A Teen Leader is a 4-H member who has a 4-H leadership role normally given to an adult, such as a project or activity leader or a 4-H club leader.
- Other leadership opportunities might be serving as an officer of a club, officer of a council, committee member, or committee chairperson.

## Are there special opportunities for older youths in 4-H?

State 4-H Council officers represent 4-H at state and district events, which they help plan and conduct. State Council officers are elected by 4-H members who attend a state 4-H event. In order to run for a State Council office, a 4-H member must submit an application. Youths in the 14 to 18 age group are eligible for nomination.

State 4-H Ambassador team members promote and assist 4-H programming at the local and state levels. This is an opportunity to obtain additional leadership skills that will enhance your future leadership opportunities. Contact your local county Extension agent for additional information about the application process.

## How do I get a green jacket?

Green jackets are worn by Senior 4-H'ers who have been elected to the State 4-H Council or have been selected as State 4-H Ambassadors. The green jackets are worn at official 4-H events.

## Are there opportunities for 4-H experiences outside the state?

National 4-H Congress is held annually in Atlanta the Friday after Thanksgiving and runs through the following Tuesday. 4-H'ers participate with other young people from across the nation in hands-on workshops, service-learning projects, and tours. 4-H'ers may only attend National 4-H Congress once.

Citizenship Washington Focus is held at the National 4-H Center in Washington, D.C., each summer. The program focuses on what being a good citizen means, on how 4-H members practice citizenship, and on how our government works. The delegation tours historic sites while in Washington.

The National 4-H Council's Youth Summit is called Ignite by 4-H. It is a four-day event held in Washington, D.C. This event provides 4-H'ers with an opportunity to engage with leading speakers in STEM, agriscience, healthy living, career readiness, and emotional well-being. Additional information is available through National 4-H Council. Here are some other examples of 4-H events outside of Mississippi:

- National 4-H Shooting Sports Championship in Grand Island, Nebraska
- National Horticulture Competition in Nebraska
- National 4-H Conference in Washington, D.C.
- National 4-H Forestry Invitational in West Virginia
- Western National Roundup in Colorado
- National 4-H Livestock Competition in Maryland
- National 4-H Dairy Conference in Wisconsin
- National 4-H Poultry and Egg Conference in Kentucky
- National Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHEP) Competition (in a different state each year)

## What 4-H events are held in Mississippi?

Your county Extension agent or 4-H club leader will give you a 4-H calendar of events that lists 4-H project workshops, activities, and contests that will be conducted at the county, district, and state levels.

A sample calendar year might look like this:

### **January**

District livestock shows  
Western Art Competition

### **February**

Dixie National  
4-H Robotics Kick-Off  
Crepe Cook-Off  
Shooting Sports

### **March**

4-H Election Day Workshop  
Spring Break camps  
Livestock Judging  
Horse Contest  
Prepare for county contests  
Multi-county Shooting Sports contests

### **April**

Poultry Chain  
Horse Bowl  
Application for Leadership Team & 4-H Awards  
County project contests  
District Shooting Sports contests

### **May**

Club Congress  
State 4-H Officer elections

### **June**

Club Congress  
District horse shows  
Project Achievement Days  
State horse show  
STEAM Day  
Summer camps  
National Shooting Sports Invitational

### **July**

Summer camps  
State Shooting Sports Invitational

### **August**

4-H Record Books due

### **September**

4-H Day at the Football Game

### **October**

State Fair  
Robot Round-up  
Grilling contest  
Omelet contests  
4-H Roll Over

### **November**

National 4-H livestock contests  
National Poultry and Egg Conference  
National 4-H Congress

### **December**

Livestock Classification



## Why are family members important to your success in 4-H?

Since most 4-H projects are carried out at home, 4-H should be a family affair. Family members can help you plan and carry out your project work. Your family can provide encouragement as well as transportation to meetings and events. Parents need to stay informed about the programs and activities of your 4-H club. Parents may share their talents and interests by serving as 4-H project and activity leaders.

## Rights of a 4-H member

As a 4-H member, you have the right to do the following:

- Enroll in the 4-H projects of your choice.
- Participate in county 4-H activities and events.
- Enter any 4-H contest for which you are eligible.

## Responsibilities of a 4-H member

As a 4-H member, you should do the following:

- Complete your 4-H project.
- Give visual presentations or demonstrations on your 4-H project.
- Make exhibits of your project work.
- Attend club meetings.
- Take part in club activities.
- Participate in county 4-H workshops and clinics.
- Assist younger members.
- Encourage others to join 4-H.
- Know the 4-H Pledge and 4-H Motto.
- Let parents and friends know about 4-H.
- Keep a record of your 4-H work as you complete your project goals.



## 4-H Clover

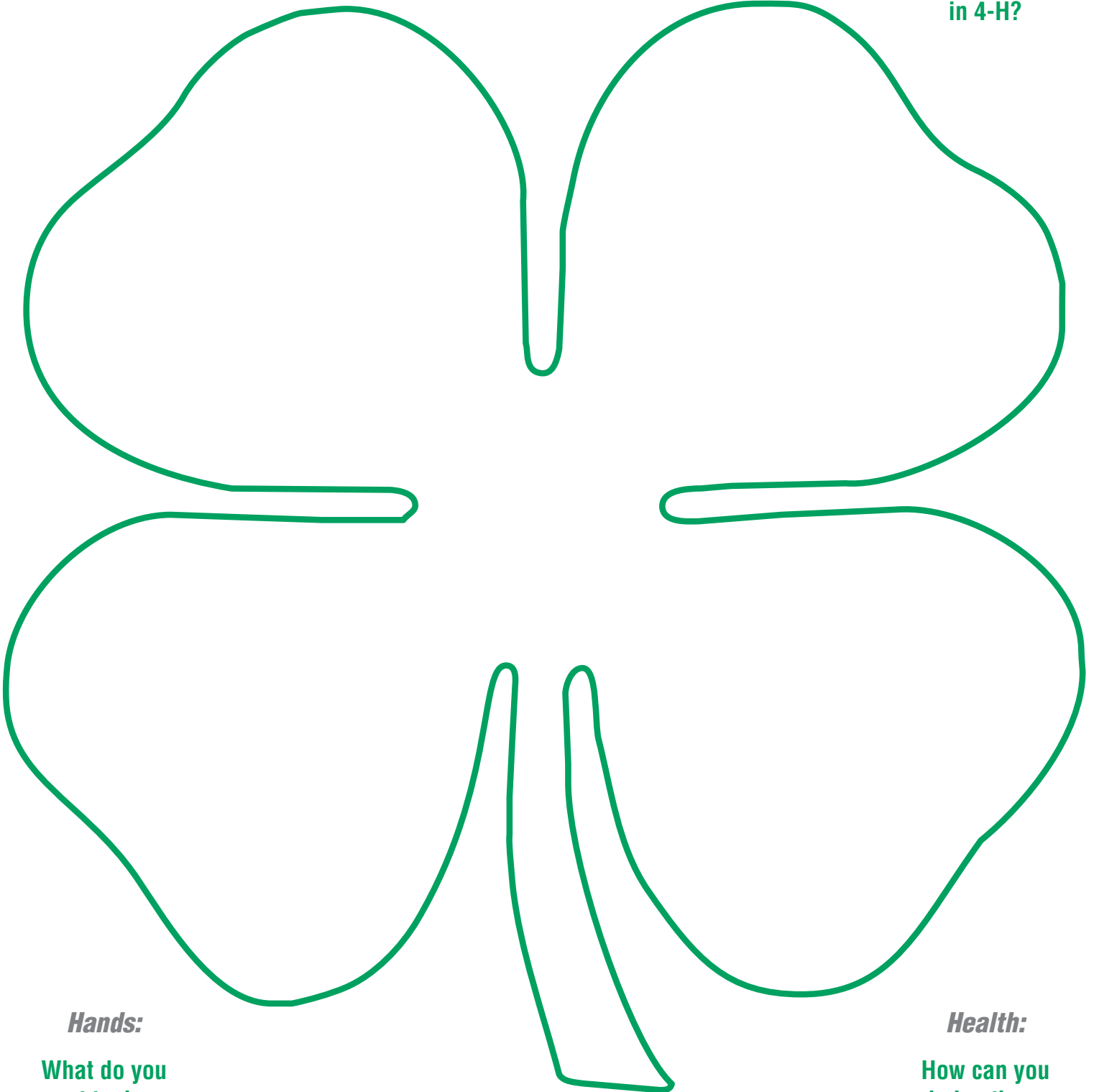
In the clover below, the four leaflets represent **head**, **heart**, **hands**, and **health**. Think about what you want to learn and do in 4-H. Draw what you hope to learn (**head**) in 4-H, what you want to feel (**heart**), what you want to do (**hands**), and how you can help others (**health**).

### *Head:*

What do you want to learn in 4-H?

### *Heart:*

What do you want to feel as a result of participating in 4-H?



### *Hands:*

What do you want to do or get better at doing in 4-H?

### *Health:*

How can you help others as a result of participating in 4-H?







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