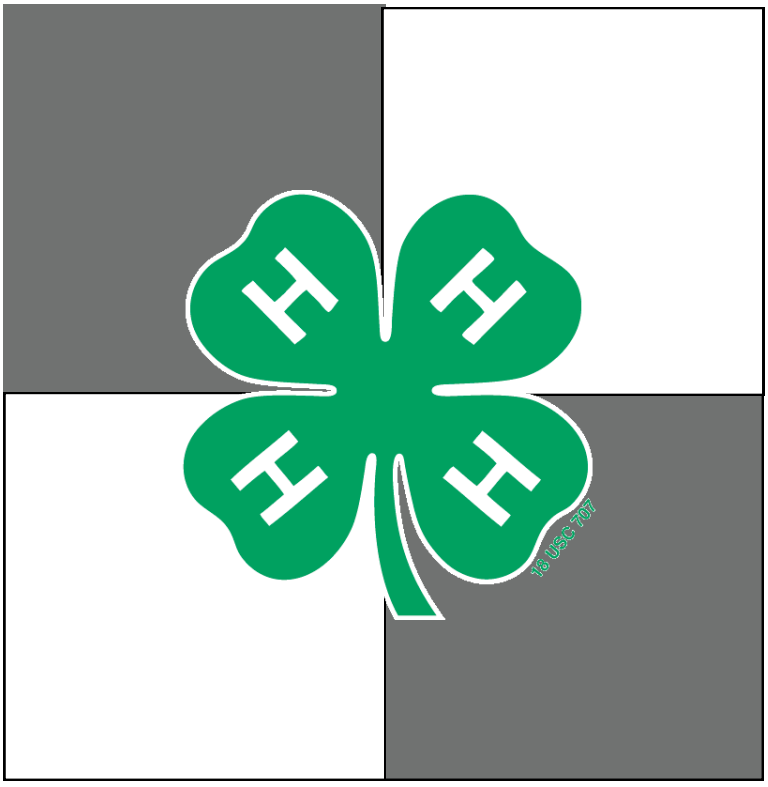
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Guidelines for Forming New 4-H Clubs



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Ohio State University Extension
Lorain County
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Dear Potential 4-H Club Leader:

Thank you for your interest in beginning a new 4-H Club in Lorain County. Community Clubs are an important part of the Lorain County 4-H Program, involving Over 1200 youth each year.

A well run 4-H club has the potential to make a life-long positive impact on youth. Through 4-H youth have the opportunity to meet new people, build new skills, and discover more about their own interests and abilities. There are approximately 60 4-H clubs in Lorain County, and if you surveyed them all you would probably find 60 different ways of leading and managing club. However, all *successful* clubs have a few things in common.

1. Clubs are lead by *caring* adult volunteers, who are there to help the youth accomplish their own goals (and not just the goals of the leaders).
2. Club advisors provide *organized* leadership, ensuring that all families have the information they need to fully participate and benefit from club, county, and state opportunities.
3. Members have a *key role* in making all club decisions, including those about learning activities, community service projects, and club structure.

The information in this packet describes the basic process of starting a new 4-H Club. Please review the Information carefully, paying special attention to the deadlines listed on the back page. You are not expected to navigate this entire process on your own, and as a matter of fact, you cannot. You will need the help of Extension staff with many of the steps. This packet serves merely as a guide and not as a do-it-yourself kit. The staff members at the OSU Extension Office are committed to helping our volunteers succeed and provide assistance with the process of beginning new clubs. Please always feel free to call with questions or concerns.

Please note that the very first step in beginning a new club is being approved as a 4-H volunteer. Maintaining the integrity of our program and the safety of our youth are our highest priorities. Please help us to do so by refraining from working with youth until after this screening and approval process has been completed.

Sincerely,

Jacki Baca
Extension Educator
4-H Youth Development

Step 1: Volunteer Screening & Selection:

New Clubs require at least 2 screened, approved adult volunteers. All OSU Extension volunteers must complete a volunteer screening & selection process before they begin volunteering in any capacity.

This process includes:

- ✦ Written Application
- ✦ Volunteer Standards of Behavior Form signed
- ✦ Criminal History Fingerprint Record Check
- ✦ 3 References
- ✦ Personal Interview (with Educator and Committee, if applicable)
- ✦ New Volunteer Orientation and Training

Potential new volunteers may begin this process by contacting the OSU Extension Office for an application packet. Please note that it can take several weeks to complete this step, so please plan ahead and start early.

Important Note: Until Step 1 has been completed, you cannot begin the other steps. ALL volunteers must complete the screening and training process before they can begin to work with youth.

Step 2: Members

All clubs must have at least 5 members from at least 3 different families who are 4-H age, Cloverbuds do not count. New club advisors are often aware of a need or interest for the new club before beginning the process, but *cannot* enroll members until they are notified that their volunteer process has been completed.

Please note that youth are not official members of the club until the enrollment process has been completed.

Step 3: First Meetings

Sometimes this first meeting is scheduled before the minimum five members have been recruited. This is okay, provided you continue to recruit members before the enrollment deadline.

Usually the first couple organizational meetings are informal, because a constitution has not yet been adopted and officers have not been elected. This is the one time it is okay for the adult advisors to operate the meeting without youth officers. It is still expected that youth participate in all items of business. Remember, 4-H Clubs belong to the members.

At these first meetings, club members can begin discussing a club name, provide ideas for club activities, and decide on future meeting dates.

Step 4: Select a Name and Submit to OSU Extension for Approval

Please refer to the fact sheet in this packet, "Choosing a 4-H Club Name" for guidelines.

Step 5: Adopt a Club Constitution and By-Laws

All 4-H clubs must adopt a constitution before members can be enrolled. Ohio 4-H has a template for club constitutions, so this process is as easy as filling in a few blanks and having members vote to accept the constitution. A copy of this constitution has been attached. However clubs should obtain an official copy with their club name entered by Extension for members to approve and sign. There are very few changes which can be made to a club constitution. All members should then sign the constitution and receive a copy, including new members who join at a later date.

By-laws are optional, and can be completed at any time after the constitution is adopted. By-laws are where clubs can include specific rules such as attendance policies, community service requirements, or other rules. If by-laws are adopted they must be signed by members and submitted to the Extension Office to be added to your official constitution. Please see the attached sample By-Laws.

Step 6: Apply for an EIN Number from the IRS

All 4-H Clubs are required to apply for an EIN (Employer Identification Number) from the IRS. 4-H clubs are legal organizations with their own EIN number. All clubs are required to obtain an EIN number before they can receive a charter or enroll members. Clubs are also required to file an annual 990N form with the IRS to maintain that number.

When you are ready to apply for your Club EIN, call or e-mail Julie Mackey mackey.181@osu.edu to schedule an appointment.

Step 7: File Your Blanket Tax Exemption Form with OSU Extension

Once you have your club's new EIN number, complete the Group Exemption Authorization form (attached) and return to the Lorain County Extension Office. We will submit this form, once your charter has been approved. (See step 8)

Step 8: Begin the 4-H Club Charter Process

There is a simple charter application and check-list which must be completed each year. This club charter is the final step to being approved as an official 4-H club, so that you may receive your enrollment packet. Please see the attached club charter form.

Step 8: Obtain and Submit Club Enrollment Packet (Due April 15th)

Once your charter has been approved, you may obtain an enrollment packet from the Extension Office. This packet will contain your volunteer and member enrollment forms, additional forms needed by Extension, and information about spring and summer events. All club enrollment packets are due to Ohio State Extension—Lorain County by April 15th.

Once your enrollment packet has been submitted, you will be officially recognized as a new 4-H Club!

Attachments:

Choosing a Name for Your 4-H Club

Ohio 4-H Club Constitution Template

Ohio 4-H By-Laws Sample Template

Ohio 4-H Group Exemption Authorization

The Ohio 4-H Club Charter Checklist

Choosing a Name for Your 4-H Club

Choosing a name for your club may be the first decision your new group gets to make. Keep these pointers in mind as you select your club name:

- **Think Non-Discriminatory**

  As a program of Ohio State University Extension, Lorain County 4-H does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, gender identity or expression, disability, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, or veteran status. Be sure you select a name which is inviting to everyone and does not exclude or offend.

- **Maintain a Positive Image**

  Your club name represents Lorain County 4-H and the 4-H Program as a whole. Select a name which upholds a positive image of 4-H. Club names cannot promote or insinuate illegal or inappropriate activities for youth. (For example: alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or violence)

- **Represent Your Club Members - Be Unique**

  Consider choosing a name which describes your club. Consider the types of projects taken by the members or their geographical location. Choose a unique name to distinguish your group. Try to avoid choosing a name similar to other clubs in your area if possible.

- **Make it a Group Decision**

  Allow every member to be involved. Each member can be involved by suggesting possible names or discussing the choices. In a large club, it may be helpful to create a committee who can narrow the choice to just a few. Allow the group to vote on the possible names and choose the one the majority prefer.

- **Submit Your Choice for Approval**

  All 4-H club names must be approved by the Extension Educator and/or Extension Staff. If you have questions or concerns while selecting your name, please call the extension office for assistance.

Adapted, in part, from: Rutgers Cooperative Extension, New Jersey Leader Training Series, Rutgers. The State University of New Jersey,

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Ohio 4-H Youth Development Club Constitution - Template

Article I. Name

The name of the Club shall be _____ 4-H Club (the "Club"). Organized in the County of _____, OH. The Club shall be organized as an unincorporated association.

Article II. Purpose

The Club will work with youth to help them grow into productive, contributing members of society. The Club will offer fun, active opportunities for personal learning and growth through club meetings, projects, hands-on learning, leadership opportunities, fairs and activities. The Club is organized exclusively for charitable and educational purposes including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

Article III. Ohio State Extension Affiliation

The Club agrees to comply with all applicable county and state OSU Extension and Ohio 4-H policies and procedures governing 4-H and agrees that the County 4-H Youth Development Professional has all necessary and proper authority to oversee the Club to ensure the Club's compliance. OSU Extension is authorized to include the Club in a group tax exemption, and the Club will supply all necessary documentation to ensure the Club's inclusion in a group tax exemption.

Article IV. Policies

Any major decisions of the Club must be voted on by 2/3 of those youth enrolled and in good-standing unless the Executive committee was authorized to make the decision.
Major decisions include:

1. Amendment of this constitution
2. Financial disbursement from the club treasury
3.

Article V. Membership

Section A. The Club will follow the current Ohio 4-H policy requirements that define eligibility age for membership:
Ohio 4-H membership is based on a child's age AND grade as of January 1 of the current calendar year. Eligibility for Cloverbud participation begins when a child is age 5 and enrolled in kindergarten. Eligibility for participation in 4-H projects and competitive events begins when a child is age 8 and in third grade. Any youth age 9 or above is eligible for project membership, regardless of grade level. Membership requires enrollment in an authorized Ohio 4-H club or group under the direction of an OSU Extension professional or an approved adult volunteer. A youth's 4-H eligibility ends December 31 the year they turn 19. Joining Ohio 4 H is a privilege and responsibility for individuals and is subject to the Ohio 4-H Code of Conduct and applicable policies of The Ohio State University.

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Section B. The Club may work with Cloverbuds, as well as project members, age 8 and in 3rd grade through age 18 as of January 1st of the current year. If working with Cloverbud members, they will be part of the total club but will have separate activity-based learning that is appropriate for their age group.
Section C. To become a member, individuals must complete an enrollment form each year with a parent/guardian signature and agree to abide by the rules defined by the Club, the Ohio 4-H Program and the County 4-H program. Members must make a commitment to follow the values stated in the 4-H Club Member Pledge.
Section D. The Club will enroll at least 5 members from at least 3 families each year. At minimum, three of the five club youth must be at least 8 and enrolled in 3rd grade, or age 9 an above regardless of grade level for Parliamentary Procedures to be followed.
Section F. The Club will meet the standards of usage and protect the 4-H Name & Emblem as set by 4-H National Headquarters.

Article VI. Officers, Elections, and Duties

Section A. The Club will have the following officers: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, (and the following optional choices of officers) Recreation Leader, Historian, News Reporter, Health Officer, Safety Officer, Environmental Officer and Community Service Leader.
Section B. Officers shall be elected annually.
Section C. Officers shall perform duties as defined in the 4-H officer guides and/or resources. If an officer resigns or can no longer serve as an officer, the Club will select a replacement.

Article VII. Committees

Section A. **Executive Committee**
The Executive committee will be made up of President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. This committee shall make any business decisions that must be made prior to the next regular business meeting. The Club members may also delegate decisions to this group.
Section B. **Standing Committees**
Standing committees are appointed by the Club president and serve as long as needed. Each committee will consist of a chair, and enough members to get the task completed.

Article VIII. Meetings

Section A. The Club will meet a minimum of six times per year. A calendar of meeting dates, times, and locations will be distributed to members.
Section B. All youth and volunteers are expected to attend at minimum 50% of club meetings. Members will be given an excused absence for illness and other reasons. Members must contact an advisor or officer, prior to the meeting and explain why they are unable to attend the meeting.

Article IX. Leadership

The Club shall be under the direction and guidance of adult local club leader(s) who have completed the Ohio 4-H Youth Development volunteer selection process.

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Article X. Enrollment and Registrations

Annually, members are required to complete a variety of enrollment registration forms and other paperwork in order to participate in 4-H activities and events such as project judging, fairs, clinics, workshops, camps, and awards. It is each member's responsibility to meet the deadline for completion of these forms. Failure to complete the materials in a timely manner may result in non-participation in the activity.

Article XI. Financial Reporting and Responsibilities

Section A. The Ohio 4-H fiscal year is defined as January 1 through December 31.
Section B. The Club will obtain and maintain its own Tax Payer Identification Number (TIN), also known as Employee Identification Number (EIN).
Section C. The Club Annual Financial Report in the format requested by OSU Extension must be submitted to the County Extension office every year by the date established by OSU Extension.
Section D. An annual IRS 990 filing (Form 990, 990EZ, or 990N, depending on Club revenue) must be completed by May 15 for the previous tax year.

Article XII. Use of Club Revenue

Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code prohibits the Club from paying any net earnings beyond reimbursements for the Club's expenses, to any of its members, directors, or officers. Additionally, Section 501(c)(3) prohibits the Club from participating in or taking sides either in political campaigns or in any effort to pass a specific law. The Club will primarily operate for educational purposes. The above limitations are explained in more detail in the following paragraph.

No part of the net earnings of the Club shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the Club shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article II. above. No substantial part of the activities of the Club shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the Club shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any other provision of this constitution the Club shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation or unincorporated association exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or (b) by a corporation, or unincorporated association contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

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Article XIII. Dissolution

Upon dissolution of the Club, any assets shall be distributed to a recognized 4-H club/4-H affiliate or distributed to the Ohio 4-H Youth Development Foundation with the approval of the county 4-H Youth Development Professional as long as such organization is an exempt organization within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose if such organization is not exempt. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by a Court of Competent Jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of the corporation is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

This constitution has been adopted by the members of _____ 4-H Club on _____

_____ _____

Signature
Club Organizational Advisor

Printed Name
Club Organizational Advisor

_____ _____

Signature
Club President

Printed Name
Club President

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4-H Club By-Laws – OPTIONAL - Template

The 4-H Club Constitution is required for every 4-H Club. Though optional, Clubs may create their own set of operational "By-Laws", as long the added rules do not conflict with the Club Constitution.

Include any additional Club rules, guidelines, expectations or policies not listed in the constitution: dues, committees, achievement requirements, record books, project exhibition, fund raising, club trips, etc.

Below are examples of optional articles that could be included in a 4-H Club's By-Law.

4-H Club By-Laws

Article I. Name

The name of the Club shall be _____ 4-H Club (the "Club"). Organized in the county of _____, OH.

Article II. Meetings

- Meetings held at on the 3rd Wednesday, 7 pm, monthly.
- The re-organization meeting held the third Wednesday in January.
- The annual achievement and awards program held the 3rd Wednesday in October.

Article III. Policies

- The Club will hold a minimum of six meetings annually that include business, social and recreation activities, and hands-on fun learning.
- All youth and volunteers are expected to attend at minimum 50% of club meetings.
- A simple majority of "votes in favor" will pass decisions, except those identified in the constitution as a major decision, which must be voted on by 2/3 of the membership.

Article V. Parliamentary Procedures

The Club will use basic principles of parliamentary procedures as defined in Roberts Rules of Order.

Article VI. Officers

- Election of officers will occur one month after the re-organization meeting.
- Nominations from the floor will also be permitted.
- The Club will vote on vacancies in any given office.

Article VII. Committees

Standing committees will be: (1) Awards and Recognition Banquet Committee, (2) Fundraising Committee, (3) Community Service, (4) Constitution and By-laws, and (5) Activities Committee.

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These By-Laws have been adopted by the members of _____ 4-H Club on _____

_____ Signature
Club Organizational Advisor

_____ Printed Name
Club Organizational Advisor

_____ Signature
Club President

_____ Printed Name
Club President

Members Present

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4-H Group Tax Exemption Authorization

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name of 4-H Club or Organization:_____

County_____

Contact Person:_____

Taxpayer Identification Number:_____
(Also know as TIN or Employee Identification Number - EIN)

Address:_____

_____

_____

By the signature below of its duly authorized Organizational Advisor, the above 4-H club or 4-H affiliate hereby authorizes The Ohio State University Extension Office to include it in The Ohio State University application for group exemption to be filed with the Internal Revenue Service.

Under penalties of perjury, I certify that the number shown above is the correct taxpayer identification number and that the club or organization named above was organized in the United States.

_____
(Signature)

_____
(Print name)

_____
(Title)

_____
Date

Return your completed form to:

4-H Youth Development – Room #418 Nationwide &
Ohio Farm Bureau 4-H Center 2201 Fred Taylor Drive
Columbus Ohio 43210

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Ohio 4-H Charter Checklist

4-H National Headquarters and Ohio 4-H Youth Development require that all clubs be chartered.

Please complete this checklist to determine whether your club has met the Ohio 4-H Club charter requirements. This checklist will be reviewed by your County 4-H Extension Professional. Chartered 4-H clubs are permitted to use the 4-H Name and Emblem according to 4-H National Headquarter guidelines. Clubs that meet these minimum requirements will be granted/continue a charter. The charter checklist must be reviewed and submitted every year to assure a club's continued compliance with the 4-H Club criteria.

Name of 4-H Club _____ EIN# _____(9 digits)

Name of Contact Advisor _____

Address of Contact Advisor _____

Criteria – Advisors to mark (x) the appropriate box:	Requirements Met	Not Met
All our adult club volunteers are approved through the Ohio 4-H Volunteer Selection Process.		
Our 4-H club has at least five youth members from three different families of which at least three are at least 8 and enrolled in the third grade of age 9 and above regardless of grade level.		
The name of our 4-H club was approved through the County Extension Office.		
Our club plans to conduct a minimum of six regular club meetings per year.		
Our club has reviewed the current constitution with the membership and a current copy is on file with the Extension Office.		
Our club has elected officers.		
Our club agrees to maintain accurate meeting minutes and financial reports.		

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Criteria – Advisors to mark (x) the appropriate box:	Requirements Met	Not Met
Our 4-H club agrees to provide a welcoming and safe environment for all club members.		
Our 4-H club plans a series of experiential learning experiences for club members.		
Our 4-H club agrees to follow all national, state and county 4-H policies and procedures.		
Our 4-H club agrees to follow the national and state 4-H guidelines for the use of the 4-H Name and Emblem.		
Our club agrees to follow national and state 4-H guidelines for fundraising.		
Our club agrees to submit the Ohio 4-H Yearly Financial Summary at the end of each club program year.		
Our 4-H club will not participate in any political campaign or devote time to attempt to influence legislation.		
Our club agrees to obtain its own Tax ID/Employer Identification Number, submit an Ohio 4-H Group Tax Exemption Authorization form and provide the current 4-H club contact name and address to the County Extension Office so that the IRS 990 Filing can be completed by May 15 each year.		
Upon dissolution of this club, we agree to follow Ohio 4-H policies for disbanding, dividing or departing.		
Additional Comments from Club Advisor(s): Advisor's Signature/Date		
Reviewer Comments: Extension Professional's Signature/Date	**Circle One**	
	Charter Granted	Charter Denied

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