



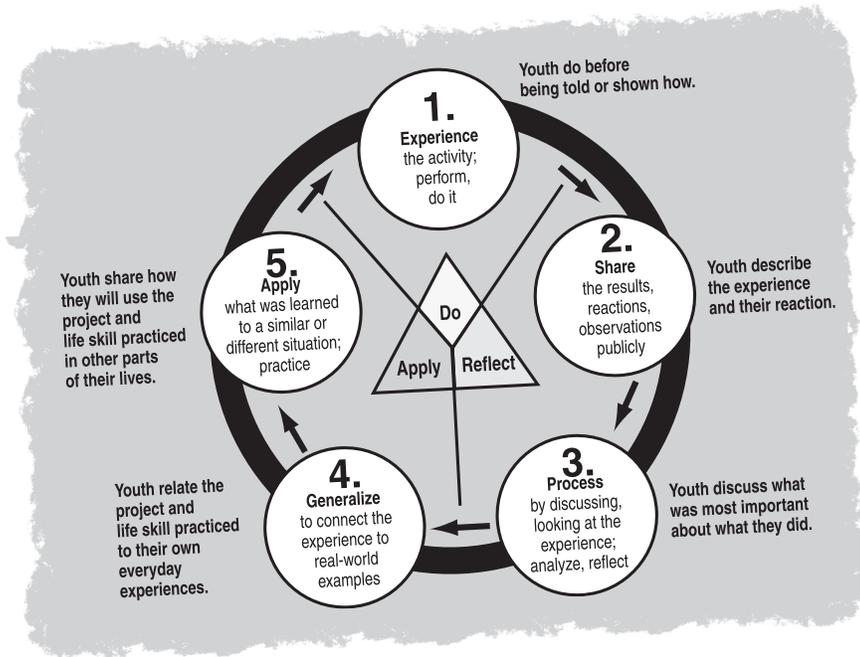
# 4-H Public Speaker's

# Handbook

A Youth's Guide  
to Preparing and  
Presenting Speeches  
and Demonstrations

# Experiential Learning Model

"Experiential learning" is what distinguishes 4-H Youth Development Education from many formal education methods. It involves providing opportunities for youth to practice what they are learning by sharing the experience, reflecting on its importance, connecting it to real life examples, and applying the knowledge that results to other situations.



The information and ideas in this manual have been designed with this model in mind. Your aim is to guide and support youth throughout the process. The following questions relate to the experiential learning model:

Examples of **sharing** questions:  
(What happened?)

- What kinds of things have you been doing to organize your speech and get ready to deliver it?
- What is the hardest part about planning your speech?
- What is something you really enjoy about putting a speech together?

Examples of **processing** questions:  
(What's important?)

- Why do you think it's important to take the time to be well prepared?
- What is something you want to work especially hard to remember to do when you give your speech?
- What is something important to keep in mind about being evaluated or judged?

Examples of **generalizing** questions:  
(So what?)

- What do you think are the best things about your speech?
- Why is it important to be able to have confidence in yourself?
- What are some things you would like to do to improve as a public speaker?

Examples of **application** questions:  
(Now what?)

- How have you used your public speaking skills in other places besides contests and speaking events?
- Describe a situation where it's been helpful to know how to plan a speech and speak in public.
- What kinds of things might you be able to do in the future with your public speaking skills?



# 4-H Public Speaker's *Handbook*

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## A note to adults:

**T**his manual, which is a part of the 4-H Youth Development *Building Bridges: Reaching People Through Communication* program, has been designed to guide youth through the process of planning, practicing and presenting a speech or demonstration.

The manual is intended to be used by youth of various ages depending on their interests and abilities. Middle school and high school aged youth will require less direct assistance from you; however those who are younger will benefit from your support and guidance. In addition, you may find it particularly helpful to refer to *4-H Public Speaking Opportunities: A Parent's Handbook* for additional tips and suggestions.

### **Communication as a Primary Life Skill**

This project focuses on the life skill of communication with a particular emphasis on helping youth acquire confidence in their abilities to speak in public.

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# Acknowledgments

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Special thanks to the following  
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Sara Jean Beach  
Liz Matzke  
Jenny Freeman  
Andy Koffman  
Marilyn Surprise  
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Irene Bakken  
Jeri Bezio  
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# 4-H Public Speaker's Handbook

**M**ost adults are terrified of getting up in front of a bunch of people to give a speech.

Now you can be the envy of all of them. They'll admire your poise and marvel at your confidence and be inspired and impressed by the things you have to say.

They'll wonder how you learned to be such a dynamic speaker. And they'll wish they, too, could have learned the secrets to your success... secrets you'll discover by taking the time to use the information in this handbook!

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## Selecting a topic

**G**iving a speech starts long before you stand up in front of an audience. The first step is deciding what to use as a topic.

### Begin with yourself!

What are some interesting things you already know something about? Think about an unusual experience you've had, a special hobby or interest that fascinates you, or an exciting place you've visited.

Curious about something you'd like to find out a little more about? Learn more about it by using it as the topic for your speech!

### Write down your ideas.

Make a list of the things that interest you. It helps to see things in writing. Sometimes it's fun to take each of the things you've listed and see what other kinds of things they remind you of. Before you know it you'll have listed all sorts of possibilities for a speech.

### Brainstorm ideas with other people.

Talk with a friend or family member about your hobbies, beliefs, experiences and ideas. Be sure to have a pencil and paper handy to jot down what you and your partner come up with.

What's hot?

### Visit the Internet.

If you have a computer handy at home or school, the World Wide Web will open up all kinds of possibilities for speech topics. Subject-based search engines like Yahoo present listings of major topics for you to click onto to get a display of all sorts of subcategories. Any one of them could end up becoming your topic!

### Visit the library.

The reference room at your public library is a gold mine for speech topics. Some of the best places to look are encyclopedias and indexes. Browse through a volume of World Book Encyclopedia and see if anything grabs your attention. Or try the New York Times Index. Be sure to have your pen and paper handy for listing ideas.

# Check it out

Still not sure what to use for your topic?  
Take some time to watch what's "hot" when you turn on TV,  
pick up a newspaper, or talk to friends and family members.

Use this survey to see if you can uncover a "hot" topic.



1. Things we've been talking about at home:
  2. Things people at school have been talking about (in the cafeteria, parking lot, gym, etc.):
  3. Newspaper or magazine headlines that grabbed my attention:
  4. Ads, TV commercials or billboards that caught my eye:
  5. The most popular movies that people are attending:
  6. What's hot on TV:
  7. What kinds of things people are listening to on the radio talk shows:
- 

## Beginning to plan your speech

Once you've selected a topic for your speech you can start having fun putting it together. Start with these questions.

### Questions about yourself

#### **Am I really interested in this topic?**

If the topic doesn't interest you, you probably won't want to spend much time putting together a speech about it. So it pays to be honest with yourself from the very beginning so that you'll get off to a good start.

#### **Am I comfortable talking about this topic?**

Being interested in something is one thing, but actually speaking about it in public is another. For example, say you want to give a speech about building a herd of cattle. Could you talk about sexual organs and describe the reproductive process without getting embarrassed?

#### **Do I really have time to put together a good speech on this topic?**

Think about what your schedule is going to be like for the next few weeks. How much homework do you need to do each day? And what about other things like soccer, basketball practice, band and choral rehearsals, concerts, play practice, church or synagogue activities, family responsibilities and chores, etc.? Will you have time for all these things and still be able to write a good speech?



## Questions about your audience

### **Will people be interested in the topic?**

If the topic doesn't interest people they probably won't want to pay much attention to what you have to say about it. You might want to see what your family and friends think about your idea before going much further.

### **What can I do to make the speech meaningful for people?**

As you plan your speech, imagine the audience sitting there saying, "So what?" You'll need to make the topic interesting. A good way to do that is by sharing personal experiences or examples that will remind people of their own lives.

### **Will people understand the topic?**

Some speeches get so complicated that people stop trying to pay attention. That doesn't mean you should avoid a topic that is unfamiliar or complex. It just means you'll need to work extra hard to make it interesting and understandable. Be sure to define unfamiliar terms and repeat important ideas. Using visual aids might also help.

### **Will people be comfortable with the topic?**

If you think your topic may be a tough one for the audience, you may want to say so at the beginning. For example, you might say, "I know this subject may be uncomfortable for some people. Still, I think it's an important issue for all of us."

## Questions about the situation

### **Is the topic appropriate for the occasion?**

If it's a formal setting, people's expectations will probably be different than if it's a more informal gathering where you can talk about just about anything.

### **How much time will I have?**

It's frustrating to run out of time before you can finish delivering your speech. Trying to fit a long speech into a short time period is like trying to fit your foot into a shoe that is too small—you might be able to do it, but you'll feel uncomfortable about it.



# Organizing the body of your speech

**T**he goal is to make sure your listeners will be able to easily follow the main ideas of your presentation. Professional speakers usually organize the body of a speech before writing the introduction and conclusion.

Here are five ways to organize main points in a speech:

## Start to Finish (Chronological Order)

1

Presentations that are arranged this way follow a pattern or describe a sequence of events. They may begin at a certain time or date, or describe the steps in a process and then move forward or backward from that point.

Example:

“I’m going to tell you about the major steps involved in preparing for a successful speech presentation.”

## Directional Pattern (Spatial Order)

2

These presentations flow naturally from one thing to the next according to a pattern that moves from one direction to another. The speech might describe something that happens from top to bottom, inside to outside, front to back or some other route.

Example:

“Here’s how snowmobilers can make sure they’re dressed warmly from the bottoms of their feet right on up to the tops of their heads.”

## Cause and Effect

3

This kind of presentation is organized around two main points. The first deals with the cause of an event. The second describes its effects.

Example:

“I want to describe some of the reasons speakers get nervous and what can happen as a result.”

## Tip

As the speech progresses, it helps to remind the audience of the major points being presented. Before moving on to the next point, repeat the one that has just been made.

“I’ve just told you what to avoid when you’re eating at a fast food restaurant. Now I’m going to tell you what to look for instead.”

# 4

## Problem and Solution

This is another way of organizing a speech around two main points. The first part describes the situation and why it is a problem. The second part explains what should be done about it.

Example:

“Homelessness is a serious problem in the United States. I am going to suggest some things that can be done by the government and individual citizens in order to solve it.”

# 5

## Piece by Piece (Topical Order)

Some presentations don't fit into any of the arrangements listed above. These kinds of speeches can often be divided into sub-topics that fit together like the pieces of a puzzle. Each of the pieces (or sub-topics) is an important part of the main subject.

Example:

“Here are five tips to keep in mind if you want to improve your speech performance.”

# Writing the Introduction and the Conclusion

**T**he first few minutes and the last few minutes of a speech are very important. Here are some tips for success:

## The Introduction (Approximately 15% of the speech)

The speaker needs to “sell” the idea to the audience so they’ll want to listen.

- Capture attention.  
Begin with a brief story or example that relates directly to the speech. Or mention a startling statement, statistic or fact. Or start with a question, quotation, or familiar saying that has to do with the topic of the speech. (“Someone once said that ‘service is the outstanding characteristic of the soul’”)
- Relate the topic to the audience.  
People pay attention to things that concern them. You might refer to a common experience, fear, or situation with which everyone is familiar. Or, challenge the audience with a question, invitation or “quiz.” (How often do you take time to help others in your community?)
- Preview the main points of the speech.  
Simply list them in the order they’ll be presented. (I’m going to share 3 reasons you too should get involved in a community service project.)

## Conclusion (Approximately 5% of the speech)

The speaker wraps up everything by summarizing the major points the audience needs to keep in mind. Just as first impressions are important, the same is true of “final ones”!

- Signal the close of the speech.  
A simple transition sentence that says “In conclusion...” or “To end...” lets the audience know the speech is nearly finished. (“In conclusion, I’d like to summarize what I’ve said about the importance of community service projects.”)
  - Reinforce the main points.  
Remind the audience about the most important things they’ve just heard. (“Remember, there are three things to keep in mind about community service...”)
  - End strongly  
Use a brief story, example, or quotation. Or, encourage the audience to do something to follow up what they’ve just heard. Sometimes it’s helpful to mention where additional information can be obtained. (“So when it comes to creating strong communities, each one of us has an important role to play.”)
- Finally, some speakers end by thanking the audience for their attention.

### Tip

Humorous stories, jokes and anecdotes can add a lot to a speech—but unless they relate to the speaker, the topic of the speech, the audience or the occasion, they can backfire. And there’s nothing worse than to tell a joke and get no response.

# Speech Planning Worksheet

## Introduction (approximately 15%)

Attention getter: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

State the topic: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Relate to audience: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Preview main points: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Body (approximately 80%)

Major point: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Major point: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Major point: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Conclusion (approximately 5%)

Signal close: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Reinforce major ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

End strongly: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## *Tips* Using Language

Remember, the audience needs to immediately be able to understand everything you say, so the words you use are important. Here are some things to keep in mind about choosing words that will help make your speech sparkle:

- Use ordinary words that people are familiar hearing. In general, shorter rather than longer words are best.
- Avoid long, complicated sentences. You can vary the length of the sentences, but in general, try to keep them short and to the point.
- It's okay to use contractions ("can't" instead of "cannot") as long as you don't over do it.
- Use words that will help your listeners hear, see, feel or even smell what you're describing.
- Try to avoid using slang. Never use words that will offend or insult your audience. It's never acceptable to use language to degrade or make fun of people.
- Use personal pronouns (I, me, mine, you, I and our) when you want your speech to sound more personal.

## *Tips*

### Using notes

You'll probably want to prepare a set of notes for your presentation. It's a good idea to do this well in advance so you'll have a chance to practice. That way you'll know when to look down at your notes and back up again at the audience.

Here are some secrets to using notes well:

- Use only one side of each card.
- Use a separate card for the introduction and the conclusion.
- Try to limit each main point in your speech to one card.
- Number your cards so you can straighten them out again if they get mixed up.
- Print largely and neatly so the cards will be readable at a glance.
- Don't use a pencil or a messy pen for copying out your notes. Consider using hi-liters or different colors of ink to help you remember to emphasize certain points.
- Use a separate color ink to jot down short hints you want to remember when delivering the speech. That way you can remind yourself to do certain things—like making eye contact with the audience, or slowing down.

### *A few words to the wise:*

- Unless you're copying a direct quote or statistic, try to jot down key words and ideas instead of transferring the entire speech word for word onto cards.
- Beware of reading your note cards to your audience!
- Remember the purpose of a lectern or podium is not for you to lean on or hide behind! It's there to hold your speaking notes so your hands will be free to gesture.

# Getting ready to deliver your speech

Once you stand up to speak, everything you do and say can help you get your message across.

## Vocal Delivery

### Variety

A flat voice that never changes can put people to sleep! But if you speak with enthusiasm and confidence it will be reflected in the way you sound.

#### Tip

Keep your voice lively and varied so your audience will be more interested in listening to what you have to say.

### Volume

Make sure to speak loud enough so that every single person in the audience will hear. If you speak too softly, some people will get frustrated trying so hard to hear you. If you speak too loudly, people will wish you'd lower your voice a little!

#### Tip

Here's how to tell whether you're speaking too loudly or too softly: Simply glance at the people in the back of the room. You'll usually be able to tell if people are having a hard time hearing you because they'll be leaning forward or else they'll have puzzled expressions on their faces.

### Rate

If you race through your speech, people will have a hard time keeping up with you. If you go too slowly, they might become bored. A good way to check your tempo is to practice with a tape recorder. That way you can hear for yourself and decide whether you need to go a bit slower or speed things up.

#### Tip

Try writing "slow down" reminders on your note cards if you have a tendency to rush.

## Pronunciation

Mispronounced words jump right out at the audience and distract them from what you're saying. So it's a good idea to always check the dictionary to find out how to pronounce words you're not used to using.

### *Tip*

When you find yourself stumbling over a word that is hard to pronounce, try to replace it with something that's easier to say. If you can't find a substitute word, be sure to practice the new word until you've got it.

## Enunciation (speaking clearly)

Get into the habit of enunciating words crisply and distinctly. It will make a positive impression on your audience and help them understand what you're trying to say.

### *Tip*

Always make sure you pronounce the d's, t's and ing's at the end of words.

#### **Avoid saying:**

wanna  
dint  
hafta  
gonna  
woont

#### **Say this instead:**

want to  
didn't  
have to  
going to  
wouldn't

# Non Verbal Communication

## Personal appearance

People will see you before they hear you. Their first impression will be based on how you look. So, you'll want to look your best.

## Eye contact

Making eye contact communicates that you're sincere and confident about what you're saying. It tells the audience you care about their reaction to your speech. When you look at people you'll be able to tell if they're bored, interested, confused, amused or inspired by what you say.

## Posture and movement

As you walk to the front of the room remember that people will be watching you. Stand up straight and tall, and move with confidence and poise (even if you're nervous!).

You don't have to stand in the same place for your entire speech. You can move about—as long as you're careful. (If you pace back and forth the audience will get distracted.)

## Facial expression

Listeners usually focus on the speaker's face to get messages about his or her emotions and attitudes. Your expression should match what you say. Look serious when the speech calls for it, and be sure to smile when your message is more light-hearted.

## Tip

If there's a podium in the front of the room, don't lean on it because that can give the audience the impression you're bored or tired or not prepared to speak.

## Gestures

Rest your hands comfortably on the top of the podium or at your sides. Always use your hands as naturally as possible—using hand gestures the way you normally would when you talk to someone. Don't put your hands in your pockets, clasp them in front or behind you, or fidget with your notes. Try not to drum your fingers or play with rings or other jewelry.

## Practicing your speech

**P**racticing will help you get comfortable with the way your speech sounds and how it feels to say it out loud. The more you practice, the better you'll get. That's why waiting until the last minute is almost as worthless as not practicing at all!

- Practice in front of a mirror so you can watch yourself as you go along. Decide how well your notes are working for you. Do you need to make some more? Or did you feel like you used too many?
- Since you'll be delivering your speech standing up, it makes sense to practice it that way, too. And be sure to use any visual aids you'll be including in your speech.
- Time yourself so you'll know if your speech is too long or too short.
- Try recording your speech with a tape recorder or video camera. Play back what you've recorded so you can check the rough spots and decide what needs to be done about them.
- Practice in front of friends or family members. Have them pay special attention to eye contact and whether you're speaking too fast or slowly. Don't get discouraged if they give you a lot of suggestions for how to improve your speech!
- Pay special attention to practicing the introduction of your speech. People are usually the most nervous during the beginning moments of their speeches. From then on things get easier.

### *To memorize or not to memorize?*

Some speakers feel more comfortable speaking from memory. Others feel it makes the speech sound "canned" and prefer relying on note cards instead. It's really up to you to decide what you want to do.

You might consider memorizing only those parts of the speech where it is absolutely necessary that you say it exactly as you wrote it—for example, the introduction and the conclusion.

## Making speech anxiety work for you

**W**henver people have to speak in public they get nervous. It's a normal reaction and it happens to even the best speakers. The secret is to control your nervousness and make it work for you rather against you.

### Calm Breathing

This is a great exercise to do in your place while waiting for your turn to speak. Place your hands on your stomach and feel it expand as you inhale deeply while counting slowly to 10. Exhale slowly for another count of 10 while feeling your stomach contract. After taking a few breaths this way, continue at the same rate but as you inhale think to yourself "I feel ...," and as you exhale "very calm."

### Loose Neck

Let your head fall back as far as it will go by pretending you're looking for footprints on the ceiling. Slowly bring your head forward again until your chin rests on your chest. Slowly lift your head and turn it to the right so you can glance over your shoulder. Then bring it around slowly to the left so you can look over your other shoulder. Repeat this as often as desired until your neck muscles feel relaxed.

### Hand Shakes

Let your arms hang loosely at your sides. Tighten your hands into fists and tense your arm muscles as you count slowly to five. Then relax and s-l-o-w-l-y begin to open your fists, letting your fingers stretch out as far as possible. Shake your hands and arms loosely and vigorously. Repeat this several times.

## **Shoulder Stretch**

Raise your shoulders as high as they will go and then let them fall back down again. Round your back by folding your shoulders toward your chest (like you do when it's cold outside). Push your shoulders back as if you're trying to rub your shoulder blades together. Repeat this several times.

## **Think positively!**

Picture yourself as a successful speaker standing in front of an admiring audience. Look at how relaxed and poised you are. Notice yourself making eye contact, smiling confidently at your audience, using gestures, standing tall and moving purposefully. Hear your voice coming across clearly and assertively. Watch how your listeners are becoming more and more involved in what you're saying. Imagine the fun you're having as you move into your conclusion and end your speech. Listen to that applause and the smiles and nods from your friends and family in the audience.

## **Think about your audience.**

Your audience isn't there to criticize or make fun of you. They're there because they want to listen to what you have to say. Expect them to be helpful and attentive. They're on your side. They want you to succeed.

## **Be rested.**

It's important that you feel at your best for your speech. Public speaking takes a lot of energy so make sure you've got it by getting a good night's sleep the night before.

## When the big day arrives

You've prepared your speech carefully, rehearsed it well, and followed all the advice you've gotten about handling your anxiety. Now it's almost your turn to give the speech and you're still nervous. Here are some last minute tips for controlling the jitters:

1

Find a private place (a restroom or corner back stage) where you can go to loosen up a few minutes before you speak. Shake your hands vigorously, roll your head from side to side or stretch your arms high over your head.

2

Before you get up to speak, practice deep, slow breathing to help calm you down. As you breathe slowly and deeply, concentrate on telling yourself that you are relaxed and in control. Continue this pattern as you walk to the front of the room.

3

As you walk to the front of the room, act poised—even if your stomach is full of butterflies and your knees feel weak! Stand up tall and walk confidently forward. If you're using a lectern, put your notes on it. Look at your audience, smile and begin your presentation.

4

As you speak, concentrate on what you are saying and how you are saying it, rather than worrying about how nervous you are. Remind yourself that you are well prepared and in control.

5

Don't worry about minor mistakes. Remember there is simply no such thing as a perfect speech. Even the professionals flub up now and then. It's only natural to say or do something during the presentation that does not come across exactly as planned. What's important is not to let minor blips worry you.

6

By the time you come to the last word in your speech, you may be feeling relieved to be finished. But remember, the last impression is as important as the first. So avoid heaving a big sigh of relief or rushing back to your seat. Instead, look up at your audience, smile and then walk confidently back to take your place.

## Coping with criticism

**I**f you participate in a speech contest or festival, you'll receive a rating and possibly an oral or written critique from the judge. Remind yourself that regardless of what he or she says about your speech, you did the best job you could.

- Don't forget there is always more to learn about public speaking—even if you think you've done a great job. Read the judge's comments with an open mind.
- Remember, you don't have to agree with everything the judge says. He or she represents only one point of view, and other people might have an entirely different opinion.
- Sometimes the things a judge says aren't completely accurate. If you've worked hard and researched your topic well, you might know more about the subject than the judge does. On the other hand, don't be too quick to disagree with what the judge has to say just because you don't like it.
- If you have an opportunity to meet with the judge, take a deep breath and remind yourself to keep an open mind as you listen. Be sure to ask for clarification if you don't understand something.
- Use the judge's feedback so you'll become an even better speaker. Ask yourself these questions: What needs to be improved? What can be done differently next time? What should be done exactly the same way? How can you make sure you remember the judge's advice?

### *Tip*

Pay attention to what the judge liked instead of getting too upset about what he or she didn't like. Even though there might be a few negative comments, there will probably be just as many positive ones. So when you read or listen to the critique be sure to look for both.









Other books  
in this series  
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University of Wisconsin-Extension, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin counties cooperating. UW-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Carl O'Connor, Director, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Madison, Wisconsin, 53706.



Produced by the Department of 4-H Youth Development, University of Wisconsin-Extension, 426 Lowell Hall, 610 Langdon St., Madison WI 53703; phone 608-262-1067. If you need this material in an alternative format, please contact the program coordinator or the UWEX Affirmative Action Office. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by the Cooperative Extension Service or bias against those not mentioned.

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