

University of Rhode Island,
College of the Environment and Life Sciences



Photo by 4-H Alumni Newell Roberts

Rhode Island 4-H Exhibit Guidelines

Revised 2024
KH

GUIDELINES FOR ALL COMPETITIONS

4-H rules will be followed by any 4-H show and any 4-H classes in open shows. Individual fairs may have additional requirements, limitations on number of entries in classes and or special classes so please read each fairs rules carefully.

1. All exhibits must be the result of the current year's work of the 4-H member exhibiting. The year includes the time from the previous year's event.
2. The 4-H exhibitor must be enrolled as a Rhode Island 4-H member, special interest or 4-H school group during the current 4-H year (October 1 of last year to September 30 this year). Youth, age 5-7 as of January 1st of the current year, are considered Cloverbuds. Adding 4-H Cloverbud classes to district fairs and events is at the discretion of the chairperson/superintendent of the event. **All Cloverbuds should receive green participation ribbons and should receive encouragement from the judge and feedback on how they can improve their project.**
3. Only articles made, produced, raised, etc., as a part of a 4-H project in the club, or individually by a 4-H member, can qualify for an exhibit. Exhibits will be accepted that were not exhibited for credit outside of 4-H.
4. **Deadlines stated for each event must be followed.** If, after registering, a member is not able to show please notify officials of that fair so that space can be used by others.
5. 4-H will not assume responsibility for items stolen, damaged or lost. All possible precautions will be taken to safeguard items exhibited.
6. Interpretation of rules and decisions about questions not specifically covered in the rules are the responsibility of the superintendent. If a situation can not be resolved, the superintendent should first contact the 4-H Fair Committee, then the Fair Committee then should contact the State 4-H Office.
7. Behavior of Exhibitors: Participation in 4-H Exhibit Events is a chance to show the public the best of 4-H. No alcohol or drugs will be allowed, and actions must be cooperative and helpful. The 4-H Superintendent has the authority to take such disciplinary action as may be necessary to enforce such rules.
8. Judges will place all worthy exhibits by the Danish award system: Blue ribbons for exemplary work, Red ribbons for satisfactory work, and White ribbons for work that needs improvement. Judges may, at their discretion, recommend honorable mention awards (green ribbons) for worthy exhibits that do not meet requirements for regular placings. After the required Danish awards are presented to all participants, individual placings may then be awarded. The Danish System is further explained on the next page. **Decisions of judges are final.** Optional - "Best of Show" awards will be determined by a vote of the judges following an evaluation of all exhibits. Therefore, "Best of Show" winners may not necessarily have the highest score in points.
9. Exhibits must be set up by the 4-H members themselves or another 4-H'er of the same age group.--NOT PARENTS OR OTHER ADULTS. A diagram of the exhibit prepared by the exhibitor and approved by the superintendent must accompany the exhibit when set up by another 4-H member.
10. All exhibit materials for setting up the exhibit must be supplied by the exhibitor.

QUICK GUIDE TO RI 4-H EXHIBITS:

Classes	DEFINITION	SOME EXAMPLES
1. SINGLE ITEMS 1A. All arts 1B. All other	One item made, grown or produced, by the 4-Her with no posters or additional materials..	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A blueberry pie ● A pillow the 4-Hers sewed ● A leather belt a 4-Her made ● A photograph ● Vegetables on a plate the 4-Her grew
2. MADE OR GROWN THEME 2A. All arts 2B. All other	Exhibit of a grouping of at least 5 items made or grown by the 4-Her with a theme. A poster or Tri-Fold is required with the theme on it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Ocean’s of Wonder” title on a tri-fold board with 7 Photos taken by the 4-Her. ● “Country Kitchen” title on a tri-fold board, with an “oven” made out of a milk crate, with 5 different baked goods displayed. ● “My Garden” on a poster that is held up with a scarecrow the 4-Her made (= 1 craft), with 2 different vegetables and 2 flowers the 4-Her grew. ● Enter a “variety show” of items if you don’t have 5 in one category. Like “Emma’s Emporium”, a scarf that she sewed, 2 baked goods, an artwork and a model she made.
3. TOPICS	An exhibit that does one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teaches or informs ● Shows how to do or make something ● Tells a story. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anatomy of a camera- with posters pointing out camera parts and functions and a camera or model camera on the table with labels.
4. POSTERS	A Poster on standard poster board that conveys a message.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We Learn By Doing in 4-H ● Animal Safety ● 4-H Knowledge or Promotion Posters
5. CLUB EXHIBIT 5A. Topics Themes 5B1- Art 5B2- Made/ Grown	At least 4 club youth, entering either a Topic or a Made or Grown Theme.	A Club topic Exhibit on Anti-Bullying showing what they learned and how they applied it, with pictures of club members learning the project. A Club Made or Grown- Theme where at least 4 kids sewed saddle blankets and 10 (minimum items) blankets are exhibited.

PROJECT AREA SPECIFICS FOR ALL EXHIBITS:

ALL EXHIBITS SHOULD BE AGE AND EXPERIENCE APPROPRIATE

Foods and Baked Goods

- No commercial mixes should be used.
- Recipes must be included on paper not larger than 8 1/2" x 11".
- Wrap a sample in clear plastic wrap for judges to taste. Do not enter anything that requires refrigeration.
- Some ideas: breads, cakes, cookies, muffins or preserved products.
- Bring only 1/4 cake, 1/2 loaf, or miniatures. For muffins and cookies, bring 5 examples and 1 for tasting.
- Jars must be uniform, properly labeled with the name of product and date prepared. The name of the exhibitor must be placed on the bottom. Any product preserved since last year's fair may be entered. USDA Guidelines must be followed. Points will be drastically taken off if not properly sealed.

Textiles, Clothing and Sewing

- Sewn accessories (bags, hats, slippers) may be included.
- Note: Definition of an article: An article consists of one piece of clothing. A two-piece outfit counts as two (2) articles (example: top and shorts).
- Pattern envelope (if used) is required as part of the exhibit. Include instructions also if alterations were made.
-

Arts and Crafts

- Attach a 3 X 5 card that describes your item and how it was made.
- All work must be original - no kits - and made within the current 4-H year.
- Some examples: leather work, metal work, wood burning, drawing, sculpture, collages, painting, embroidery,
- No copyrighted materials, such as Garfield, Snoopy, Ninja Turtles or Batman, may be used.
- All exhibits should be free standing for table top display.
- The back of the artwork must have the youth's first name, last initial and club listed.

Gardening (Flowers, Vegetables, Terrariums and Potted Plants)

- Each vase of cut flowers must contain at least three stems/variety, unless it is a large specimen over 4" in diameter.
- One plate per variety of vegetables. Example: 1 plate of zucchini.
- Large varieties (broccoli, melons, winter squash) 1 per plate
- Medium varieties (Zucchini, cucumbers, sweet peppers) 3 per plate
- Small varieties (beans, carrots, hot peppers, cherry tomatoes) 5 per plate
- Avoid all blemishes - no dirt, decay, disease, insect marks, bruises, crust, scratches, marks, etc.
- Select only vegetables at the peak of perfection and avoid wilting. Spend time selecting.
- Use extreme care in cleaning to avoid scrub marks and damage, particularly on beets and carrots.
- Pack carefully for transporting to the fair.
- Be sure each variety is correctly labeled - green bean, summer squash, is not enough. Record the variety name from the seed package, for example: Beans – Contender
- Small paper plates or other items may be used to decorate and display vegetables, arrange simply but attractively.
- Select the size, color and form which is normal for the variety being shown.

Food Preservation – Fruits, jams, jellies, pickles, relishes & vegetables:

- 1 Jar properly sealed and labeled with variety and date sealed. Follow USDA guidelines for preparing, sealing.

Photo Exhibit:

- Entries may be Black and White or Color Photos.
- All Photos and Photo Stories must: *Convey a message, or *Define a subject or mood, or *Tell a story
- All Entries must be labeled with a short identifying caption on the front that conveys the message/meaning of their work's theme. Individual photos must be 5" X 7" minimum; 8" x 10" maximum.
- Photo Stories may use photos of any size, maximum of 8" x 10". Overall size cannot exceed 16" x 20".
- All entries must be matted or framed and be free-standing with members providing their own table easels. The exhibitor's name, age, club name, and caption must be on the back of each entry.

SINGLE ITEM EXHIBITS

DEFINITION and RULES:

Exhibits of items made or grown by the individual 4-H Club Member. No theme, signs or special decorations are needed for this exhibit. Items exhibited should not be the same items as those entered in the club or individual exhibits described above. Limited or no premiums are usually paid for single items. Some fairs will have additional restrictions on how many of each kind of single item will be accepted; make sure you read the rules for the fair you are entering. Individual items made by a 4-H'er will be placed in exhibit space by the exhibit staff. Individuals participating in a club exhibit and/or individual exhibit may also have an individual item in the same project. **Up to three (3) entries per project area.**

MADE OR GROWN THEME EXHIBITS

DEFINITION and RULES:

Exhibits showing a grouping of at least 5 items made, or grown by one individual - Examples: foods baked, clothing made, crafts completed, vegetables grown, foods preserved. The Exhibit is actually a display of the results of that year's project work. Develop the exhibit around a central idea or theme that will catch the public's attention. You can put the theme up on a poster board, tri-fold board or have it independently stand with the items. The same project areas are used as in single items, but now you are building an exhibit with 5 items and a theme. A theme is REQUIRED with this type of exhibit. If you don't have enough items in one project area combine three or more project areas for a "variety show". This can be 2 photos, 2 vegetables, and a sewing item. Individual members participating in a club exhibit may also have an individual exhibit in the same project. **Only one (1) exhibit per project area.**

TOPIC EXHIBITS

DEFINITION and RULES:

Topic Exhibits tell a story about a project or subject. Topic Exhibits can be done in any 4-H Project Area. It may be a collection of items made or grown, **BUT IT IS NOT JUST A COLLECTION**. Instead, in topic exhibits the 4-H Member uses pictures, graphs, drawings, models, etc. to convey a message. Topics, for example, could be: 4-H Cares, 4-H Develops Leaders, Promoting 4-H, A Hands on Exhibit to be touched, Servicing Small Engines, What I Learned from Collecting..., We are What We Eat, Learn about the Arabian Horse... Plan your exhibit around an idea that is within the interest and experience of the 4-H club members. The exhibit should quickly tell a story which will arouse interest, stimulate thought and get action. Sixty seconds is average viewing time. Keep your exhibit simple --- one idea --- have a message --- use color if possible --- use imagination. Hands-on Topic Exhibits are set up expressly to be touched by the public to enhance the educational message. **Limit of 1 topic exhibit per project area.**

POSTER ART

DEFINITION and RULES:

All posters must be designed on, or affixed to, standard poster board of 22" x 28" dimensions. They may be horizontal or vertical, not 3-dimensional. Posters incorporating copyrighted material, like the cartoon character "Peanuts" will not be accepted. The 4-H member's name, age, and a brief artwork interpretative statement must be affixed to the back of the poster board in the upper left hand corner. Posters should make people stop, read and remember. Use large letters, keep it simple, print neatly, use dark ink, and two or three colors. Posters without a 4-H Clover or some 4-H promotion will lose 10 points. Some poster ideas: We Learn By Doing in 4-H, 4-H Teaches Responsible Citizenship, Skills for Life Through 4-H, Animal Safety, knowledge or promotion posters. **Limit of 2 posters per youth.**

CLUB EXHIBITS

DEFINITION and RULES:

Club Exhibits are designed and created by the whole club, or at the minimum 4 members of the club. Clubs can enter Made or Grown Theme Exhibits or Topic Exhibits. No more than 1/3 of the items or the topic board may be contributed or made by any one member. A tag, giving first name and age of the youth that made each item should be attached to a group of items. All club exhibits must have a theme or Topic Title such as, "Swing Into Spring" (clothing), "Tropical Treats" (foods), Learn about the Arabian Horse, etc. The same items entered as club exhibits may not also be included as a part of individual exhibits. This included project areas not listed in this guide so far. Example Horse, cattle, veterinary science, environmental science, rocketry, etc. For Club Art or Made/Grown themes the club must enter more than 10 items. **Limited to 1 club exhibit in any one 4-H project area.**

WHY HAVE 4-H EXHIBITS?

1. To recognize 4-H members for their achievements and provide feedback to them regarding their accomplishments.
2. To provide a goal which motivates youth to achieve in their 4-H project work.
3. To provide educational experiences for 4-H members not available in other 4-H programs.
4. To provide the public a better understanding of 4-H work.
5. Any premium money or special prizes awarded serve as a reward as well as an incentive to encourage further learning and growth through 4-H work.

AWARDS IN 4-H

THE DANISH SYSTEM - THE BLUE, RED AND WHITE

When the work of 4-H members is judged in 4-H programs or events the Danish system of awards is used. Unlike other systems that select the one best, or rank the top winners, this system rewards all youth who reach a standard level of quality. Using the Danish system it is possible for all participants to receive blue awards if their work reached the "excellent" level of quality. On the other hand, all participants could receive white awards if the level of quality of each is only deserving of a "worthy" award. The red award is used to denote the middle, "good" level of achievement.

It is competing against this standard that provides the incentive for youth. It is a goal they all can reach. A youngster doesn't need to be concerned about doing better than their fellow member. They can also feel free to help others without fear of losing out themselves. Since the definition of a top quality exhibit is what judges will use for judgment, it is important that it be defined clearly for members in advance, as for judges. Information about score sheets, or judging criteria should be provided in advance. Information about the age, experience in the project and other situations faced by the youth are provided for judges so judging will take these factors into consideration.

CHARACTERISTICS OF JUDGING SYSTEMS

Danish (group award) System

- All participants are recognized for their level of achievement
- All who reach the level of excellence set by the standard are awarded recognition (blue, red, or white)
- Youth compete against their own record
- No one is left out

Individual Comparison System

- Only top performers are recognized, only one can be the best
- First place is selected in comparison with others competing.
- Nothing is learned about the level of quality that is reached.
- The best may be only slightly better or a great deal. All may be poor quality
- Youth compete with others.
- More problems arise with the element of human failure, bias and prejudice on the judges part.

4-H EXHIBITS --- FUN TO PLAN, DESIGN, AND SHOW

Preparing an exhibit is an opportunity for youth to show the results of their work. Adults are not to work on the exhibits themselves, only provide guidance. Making a 4-H Exhibit can be fun! An exhibit is one of the best ways to tell the public about 4-H Projects, Activities and Achievements. 4-H Exhibits can...

- Give information about a subject by telling a story or by showing the results of what was learned in a 4-H project;
- Show how to do, or make, something by teaching a skill or method by showing the steps involved and then the finished project;
- Promote 4-H by showing what 4-H'ers can do!

A good exhibit will capture the attention of its audience and convey its message in only 60 seconds! Sound impossible? It can be done by following some basic guidelines in the planning and building of an exhibit.

STEPS FOR PLANNING THE EXHIBIT

1. Help 4-H Members to decide on the type of exhibit(s) they wish to enter.
2. Help them to choose a project area that they have enjoyed and is within their abilities and skills.
3. Review these guidelines with them, emphasizing general overall rules and those specifically applying to their project .
 - Check the pages that describe the fair you are entering for details about each event. It should list how much space will be allowed for each type of exhibit listed above. Space will vary from event to event. Always plan **to build an exhibit to fit the smallest area you will exhibit in during the 4-H year**, you can almost always add more to an exhibit if you have extra space, but it isn't too easy to cut down a backboard or poster after its made. If you have a question, call the building superintendent.
5. Now its time to put the exhibits "down on paper." Have each group or member write down the following information about each exhibit...
 - Subject and Type of Exhibit
 - Theme (or Title) The Theme should clearly identify the exhibit - it is usually short, simple, creative and attention getting. The theme is usually the focus of the exhibit - sometimes a poster is used, often cut-out letters - whatever the choice, the theme is followed through in considering what models to use, what props, decorations, etc.
 - Picture of the exhibit - a pencil drawing of the exhibit layout. This should include where posters, props, visuals, exhibit items - whatever will be used - will be placed. Note: A place near the front of the exhibit should be left free for the placement of the score sheet. The plan/sketch is for member use, so it need not be fancy. Help the member(s) to evaluate the exhibit plan. Make sure the member(s) has kept within the exhibit space allotment.
6. The finishing touches to any exhibit are in the presentation - the appearance of the exhibit. Discuss with members the following basics of preparing visuals and arranging the exhibit...
 - Keep all visuals simple in design
 - Make sure all exhibit items, pictures, props, lettering - everything in the exhibit is large enough for the audience to read/see clearly as they pass by.
 - Exhibits containing many items or a lot of materials should be put on several posters/charts or levels (Hang them up, raise items on covered boxes, etc.)
 - Label all items in an exhibit for Sections A & B; official labels are available from the 4-H Offices, but members may make their own to go with their theme as long as they contain the same information.
 - Keep lettering simple, clear and well spaced. Avoid "fancy" lettering. Use lower case letters, unless its a title or of course a proper name or the beginning of a sentence. Vertical letters are difficult to read - keep words on the horizontal. Avoid using typed pages/labels - they are usually too small.
 - Select a color scheme for the exhibit. Usually one color or at least the same pattern is selected for the overall background of the exhibit. This may in some cases mean covering the table and wall space. Fabrics, tablecloths, crepe paper, construction paper, wallpaper, sheets, etc. are all good background covers.

After the exhibit is complete, have the member(s) set up the exhibit(s) at home or at the club meeting. Evaluate the exhibit and make the necessary changes! Have the member(s) list all the items in the exhibit on a sheet of paper, and then list the "equipment" needed to put up the exhibit. This equipment might include: Scissors, Hammer & Nails, Tape, Pins/Tacks, Magic Markers, Staple Gun & Staples, Other?? Put this list, with the exhibit sketch, in a SAFE place and you're ready for the Fairs! Good Luck!