



UConn 4-H Fact Sheet



UConn | EXTENSION

Understanding 4-H Judging

Having one's accomplishments evaluated can be motivating and educational for 4-H'ers. When judges critique their work or performance, it serves as a guide for further improvement. The judging process can be more valuable than the award or recognition. To plan, practice, and present a finished product is to "learn by doing." 4-H'ers learn quickly that judging results reflect a personal opinion, and that evaluation will vary among judges.

Types of 4-H Evaluation

Project Judging - The judge evaluates the finished products against a set of standards without the member present. The focus is the quality of the project itself and not the learning process. Comments are provided to the participant in writing, usually on a score sheet. This method is often used at the 4-H Fair in the "home show" to judge stand alone projects like artwork, crafts, woodworking, models, technology, collections, canning and baked goods, flowers and vegetables, educational exhibits, sewing and needlework, animal products and geology, etc.

Performance judging - The judge evaluates how a 4-H'er accomplishes a task or goal in progress. The judge looks for skills being used, as well as evaluating the end result. This type of event enables the 4-H'er and the judge to see how the performance directly effects the end product. Comments are often provided verbally and occasionally in writing on a score sheet. This method is often used to evaluate showmanship and other performance classes in the livestock, dog and horse arenas. It is also used to judge public speaking and demonstrations as well as performing arts.

Interview - The judge interviews the participant as he/she evaluates the product against a set of standards. The purpose of this judging is to determine what the 4-H'er learned in completing the project. Comments are provided verbally and also in writing on a score sheet. This method of judging is often used in large project or long term project evaluation. Fashion review and food shows can use this approach. State reward trips are also awarded through both application and interview, where participants will be asked to discuss their 4-H experience as a whole.

Danish Judging in 4-H

Most 4-H judging involves the Danish system. In this system, the judges do not judge one person's work by comparing it to another's. The evaluation is made against a standard. A judge looks to see whether requirements are met. Often a score sheet is used, available from the county 4-H office. If the work meets high standards, it receives an excellent rating and blue ribbon (score of 90 to 100). A red ribbon signifies very good work (score of 80-89). A white ribbon signifies work meets standards well enough to be shown, but is only fair quality (score below 80). One advantage of this system is that everyone whose work fulfills minimum qualification can receive a ribbon. If all entries are judged to be excellent, all receive blue ribbons. The purpose of using the Danish judging system is to give every 4-H member the recognition deserved for the work that was done. It also helps young people recognize the need to improve their skills and to "make the best better."

Peer Competition

While Danish judging focuses on set standards, other judging compares the work of one 4-H'er to another. This is peer competition. This type of judging may be used to select the "best" projects within a class. An example of this would be awarding a "Best in Show" rosette to the photo with the highest score in a photo judging contest. In some projects, such as horse shows, participants are ranked against one another and given placings, such as 1st, 2nd, 3rd place, etc.

What Guidelines Do Judges Follow?

Judges must know the rules and criteria agreed upon by 4-H participants, leaders, and staff. Each judge should be given information about the judging activity including scoring sheets. In addition, judges should be aware of and understand the philosophy behind the 4-H program and the purpose of evaluating 4-H'ers' projects and performances. An orientation for judges presented by staff helps to ensure a fair judging experience for everyone.

When you are the judge:

- Know and understand the UConn 4-H Philosophy
- Consider both the finished product as well as the effort.
- Know the standards and follow them carefully and consistently.
- Judge each entry on its own merit, while considering the age and experience of the exhibitor.
- Acknowledge all that was done well before making suggestions for improvement.
- Written statements should be constructive but not harsh, with concrete suggestions for improvement. They should also focus on the accomplishments to foster positive youth development.
- Use judging as an opportunity to motivate children and help them grow and learn.