



4-H Leader Training Series

4-H Cloverbuds: 4-H for Younger Members

What is a 4-H Cloverbud?

4-H can be a valuable experience for people of many ages. In South Carolina, the earliest 4-H experience is belonging to a 4-H Cloverbud Club or participating as a Cloverbud member in non-competitive 4-H educational activities and events.

"4-H Cloverbuds" is intended as a club program for children, ages 5-8. The purpose is to provide a fun and educational experience that helps children to:

- learn to get along with others
- explore many interests
- learn subject matter skills
- build self-confidence through healthy experiences
- become prepared to graduate into the standard club program when they reach age 9
- have fun!

4-H Cloverbud Age

A child can belong to a 4-H Cloverbud Club if he or she is age 5-8. He or she can join a standard 4-H club, usually a project or community club, when 9 years of age. (4-H age is as of January 1 of the current 4-H year, which spans September through August.)

The 4-H Cloverbud Club

Refer to *How to Start a 4-H Club* for step-by-step guidance. 4-H Cloverbud clubs are similar to standard clubs in that they meet regularly and are led by adult volunteer club leaders. Most Cloverbud clubs have approximately five to eight members per leader and meet about twice each month. Some clubs choose or designate officers and change them several times a year so that each member has the chance to serve in more than one office.

4-H Cloverbud clubs are different from standard clubs in that Cloverbud members do not select one or two specific projects to work on during the year. Instead, they participate in a variety of short-term activities in many different subject areas.

4-H Cloverbud club leaders are very important people because they serve as role models to the youngest 4-H members. They are also responsible for making sure that the child's first 4-H experience is a positive one.



Written by Rita Natale Saathoff, 1994. Revised for use in South Carolina by Keith G. Diem, Director of 4-H Youth Development, 2005. Used by permission.

4-H Cloverbud Curriculum Materials

Because 4-H Cloverbud clubs are established to provide younger youth with an introduction to 4-H in a non-competitive environment, the 4-H curriculum intended for Cloverbuds does not focus in-depth on individual 4-H projects. 4-H Cloverbuds are urged to use age-appropriate, Cloverbud-specific materials such as the *Exploring the Treasures of 4-H* curriculum, available from the 4-H Cooperative Curriculum System (www.n4hccs.org). The *Exploring the Treasures of 4-H Youth Guide* includes fun activities in a workbook format for each child to complete with the help of a 4-H leader, parent, teacher, or teen leader. The *Helper's Guide* consists of dozens of group activities which cover a variety of subjects. Each lesson has all of the information a leader needs in order to teach. Most lessons also include suggestions for field trips, guest speakers and follow-up activities for the member to do at home. By using the Exploring 4-H materials with flexibility, the Cloverbud leader can give these younger 4-H'ers many opportunities which will prepare them for participation in a standard 4-H club. Realize that the youngest 4-H Cloverbuds may need more assistance from adults and may not be able to fully participate with the older Cloverbuds because of reading ability and other developmental differences. Consult the county 4-H staff to discuss age appropriate activities and curriculum materials.

Record-keeping for 4-H Cloverbuds

As with older 4-H youth, keeping a record book can help a 4-H Cloverbud member creatively express his or her experiences. However, Cloverbuds aren't expected to do the same caliber of work as older members. The *Exploring the Treasures of 4-H Youth Guide* integrates record-keeping into fun activities they do with the help of a 4-H leader, parent, teacher, or teen leader. Methods sometimes used for record keeping with Cloverbuds include drawings, clippings from magazines, poems, souvenirs, and photos. Another idea to help with keeping records is to use self-closing bags to store items made or collected at meetings or on field trips.

The 4-H Cloverbud experience is non-competitive

Besides being introductory and exploratory, the 4-H Cloverbud program is non-competitive. South Carolina 4-H policy does not permit 4-H members below age nine to be given a rating or score for individual projects or activities. This policy is based on research which shows that children of this age need to progress and develop at their own speed, and that they find it especially hard to lose. To help these youth develop self-confidence, they need to have less pressure to "win." Because success is very important at this age, the satisfaction of just having completed an activity helps to increase self-esteem. It's the process and the fun of participating, not the product, which is important to these children.

**Recognition
of Cloverbuds
Participating in 4-H
Events**

Because 4-H Cloverbuds are limited to participation in non-competitive activities, some counties hold events designed especially for 4-H Cloverbud members. These may include special camp sessions, rallies, graduation ceremonies, fun nights and picnics. Often, Cloverbud members are invited to participate in regular 4-H events. Although projects of 4-H Cloverbud members are not rated, these younger 4-H'ers are still recognized for their work. If judging is part of the event, the member may participate with the judge providing positive comments of encouragement, but no score or rating is given. They may receive recognition of participation, such as a green ribbon or small token, as well as end-of-year certificates or pins. Ideally, separate, age-appropriate learning activities should be offered to 4-H Cloverbuds that may eventually lead to their participation in full-fledged competitive events when they are at least nine years of age, if they choose. Refer to *Recognizing Your 4-H Members' Achievements* for the many ways to recognize youth besides through peer-to-peer competition.

**Most important, being
a 4-H Cloverbud
should be Fun!**

The 4-H Cloverbud years sets the stage for a child's participation in the 4-H program. It is an opportunity for younger children to begin to have hands-on experiences as 4-H members. It is also a chance for adults to serve as role models at this important time in a child's life. Most importantly, the 4-H Cloverbud experience is intended to be educational and fun for all involved!

Build Pride in 4-H!

Cloverbud-age children especially like to be part of groups. Encourage them to show their "4-H colors." 4-H flag sets, t-shirts, promotional items and gifts can be ordered from the national *4-H Source Book* and online at www.4-hmall.org.

References:

[K-3 Youth in 4-H: Guidelines for Programming](http://www.cyfernet.org/curricul/k-3_manual.html) (Available at www.cyfernet.org/curricul/k-3_manual.html)

[Learn About 4-H Prep: NJ 4-J Prep Leader Activity Guide](#). Department of 4-H Youth Development, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, New Brunswick, NJ, 1982.



4-H is the youth development program of the Cooperative Extension Service, a nationwide partnership of federal, state, and county governments, and the private sector. The Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to people of all ages, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status and is an equal opportunity employer.

Rev. Oct. 2005