



Planning a Successful Field Trip

Develop a plan for 4-H project learning activities

Field trips can be a great contribution to the 4-H philosophy of learning by doing. 4-H members can observe and participate in a real-life 4-H project-related experience. Here are some suggestions to make a field trip fun, safe, and educational:

Instead of deciding what to do at the last minute, try to plan ahead. This will make it more fun for the kids and less stressful for you. Think of creative ways for youth to learn what they need to in the 4-H project using a variety of methods. Involve them in planning and doing. Consider the following as you plan for project activities, such as field trips:

- What will be learned?
- What teaching methods will be used?
- Will there be opportunities for hands-on experiences?
- Field trips make good introductions or summaries of projects.
- To make it fun, consider a theme and wear special hats, clothing, or costumes that fit the location and purpose.

Identify a variety of potential field trips

Look for places that:

- Match needs of project.
- Are relevant and interesting to youth (give them choices when possible).
- Are affordable.
- Are close by.

Some field trip ideas



Consider these places and activities:

- Environmental and nature centers
- Bird sanctuaries and wildlife refuges
- Historical sites
- Natural attractions, including state and national parks
- Hiking, biking, walking, canoeing
- Farms, orchards, greenhouses, nurseries
- Factories and corporations
- Government offices and agencies
- University offices, laboratories, and research stations

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Make contact with the site to be visited

- Hospitals and veterinary clinics
- Airports, train stations, bus terminals
- Museums
- Cultural festivals
- Supermarkets and other retail stores
- Zoos, hatcheries, aquariums
- Radio & television stations, newspapers
- Police and fire stations
- Restaurants and bakeries

- Call in advance.
- Make reservations if needed.
- Find out if there are fees; ask for group rate discounts and check methods of payment.
- Visit site in advance if possible.
- How accessible is the site for people with disabilities?

Arrange transportation

- Busses, vans, or cars? Family-owned or rent? Make sure drivers have valid licenses and laws are obeyed. Consider using public mass transit.
- How much time will trip take?
- Have maps and directions available for all drivers.
- Share costs of fuel and tolls spent by drivers.
- Getting there can be half the fun. Consider side trips, singing and games along the way.

Don't forget the essentials

- Food (bag lunches, buy from restaurant, etc.).
- Lodging, if overnight.
- Name tags help the group know each other and the public identify participants who may wander astray.
- Where are the bathrooms when you get there? Will stops be needed along the way? As a group leader, you may want to bring along a couple of rolls of toilet paper "just in case."
- What is appropriate clothing for participants to wear? (such as type of shoes to wear or not to wear).
- Money for food, entrance fees, souvenirs, etc.
- Cameras, camcorders.

Recruit adequate adult supervision

- Have at least one adult for every 10 youth. Get more adults for young children or for potentially hazardous activities. At least two adults are preferred.
- Explain roles and responsibilities to adults. Make sure all are working from same rules and expectations! Adults are there to have fun also but their main job is serving as a chaperone!

Have each youth participant complete 4-H Event Permission Form for Youth

Youth participants on a field trip must complete the *4-H Event Permission Form for Youth*. This form has several important parts including parental permission, health information, and behavior agreement. The most important reason for using this is to make sure parents are aware of what type of activity their children are participating in. Refer also to the fact sheet *Liability of 4-H Volunteers*. Bring completed forms with you and save after trip.

Have adult chaperones complete the 4-H Event Agreement Form for Adults

Especially if the trip is overnight, all adult chaperones must complete the *4-H Event Agreement Form for Adults*. If it is a day trip, it is still a good idea for all adults to complete one because it provides important health information which will be needed in case of an emergency.

Prepare 4-H'ers for trip

- Explain where they are going and what they will do or see.
- Agree on rules of behavior and safety.
- Encourage them to devise questions to ask when they get there.
- Identify some of the things to look for.

Focus on safety

- Secure accident insurance coverage for participants, "just in case."
- Bring first aid kits. Try to bring along adults with first aid or C.P.R. training.
- Keep kids together. Do periodic head counts.
- Break into smaller, more manageable groups. Have check-in times if the group splits up.
- Assign "buddies" (pairs of youth who will look out for each other).

Capture the experience and memories

- Photos/videotape.
- Scrapbook(s).
- Participant diaries.

Evaluate the experience and share reactions of participants

- What did participants learn? How did the experience relate to the 4-H project or real life?
- What did participants dislike? Why?
- What could be improved?

Refer to *Learn by Doing the 4-H Way* for tips on using the do-reflect-apply experiential learning process.

Say thank you!

- Have kids decide how they want to thank people (hand-written notes, big cards with group signatures, send souvenirs/mementos, post cards, etc.)
- Write thank you notes/letters to all who helped (parents, chaperones, tour guides, etc.)
- This leaves a positive, lasting impression of 4-H and its members.

Share what was learned with others

- Send a *4-H Club Activity Report* to your county 4-H Office. Many counties print such highlights in the county 4-H newsletter.
- Give public presentations to other clubs and to the public (such as to local service organizations).
- Create an exhibit to display in public places and at the County 4-H Fair.
- Inform the media by writing a news release or calling them in advance. (Consider inviting a reporter from local media along with you.)

Don't have time or money to go on field trip? Bring the field trip to you!

When you can't go to the "field," bring the "field" to you. This can be done by videotape, guest speaker, demonstration, games or simulations. Let kids use their imagination and natural curiosity. Be creative and nothing is an obstacle to fun learning - in your



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