

# LETTERS TO NEW LEADERS



## Letter 1: What is 4-H?

### In this letter you'll find:

- Introduction to the Letter Series.
- What is 4-H?
- How Does the 4-H Program Work?
- What's More Important—The 4-H Project or the 4-H Member?
- What is the 4-H Leader's Job?

### Dear Leader,

So you've volunteered and have been selected to be a new 4-H Leader! Congratulations! You're starting an interesting, challenging, and rewarding experience. Because we know you have lots of questions about this new venture, we believe you'll find the following information helpful.

This is the first of a set of seven letters that you will receive in the next few months, along with some supporting materials. We suggest that you keep them all together in a binder for easy reference. When you have all seven letters and reference materials, you will have a useful 4-H leader's handbook.

*Letters to New Leaders: Contents* is enclosed with this letter. Put it in the front of your binder to help you locate information. This will also provide a preview of future letters.

The next six letters include information on getting started with a 4-H project, planning and

conducting 4-H club meetings, leadership and teaching techniques, 4-H activities, records and advancement programs, and development opportunities for 4-H Leaders.

You will notice that at the end of each letter is a section titled "How I can use the information in this letter." This section allows you to write down your personal thoughts and ideas for later use with your 4-H project.



### What Is 4-H?

4-H is an experiential youth education program for youth ages 6 to 19. In California, 4-H is a part of University of California Cooperative Extension. Each county has an Extension office which administrates the 4-H program. At the national level, 4-H is under the leadership of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Volunteer adults who serve as 4-H Leaders are considered volunteer agents of University of California. Through their local 4-H Youth Development Advisors, 4-H volunteers have access to research and information from the University.

## How Does the 4-H Program Work?

It's often said, "It is better to build a child than to mend an adult." This, in a nutshell, is the main objective of the 4-H program. In 4-H, volunteer leaders encourage youth to gain knowledge and learn practical life skills and to apply both in their project area. Members learn to work together as a team and develop a sense of fair play. 4-H members learn decision-making skills through their project work, judging contests and other 4-H activities.

As 4-H members mature, they have opportunities to learn and practice leadership skills within their own club and at county activities. They also begin to develop an appreciation and understanding of their community through individual or club service projects.

Members improve their communication skills through club interaction, 4-H record-keeping, and presentations. They also develop positive attitudes about themselves and others, learn basic health and safety practices, acquire educational and vocational experiences, and learn how to set realistic goals for themselves through individual time management.

All of this doesn't happen at once, but develops gradually as members continue their involvement in 4-H under the direction of their leader.

## What's More Important—the 4-H Project or the 4-H Member?

The 4-H member, of course! *4-H is a people program.* Its objective is to develop young people. Projects are tools for teaching youth by stimulating their interests. Our ultimate goal is for the 4-H member to know more and be able to do more at the end of the year. A commonly stated example of 4-H philosophy is, "A blue ribbon 4-H'er with a red ribbon project is more desirable than a red ribbon 4-H'er with a blue ribbon project."

## What is the 4-H Leader's Job?

❶ To help 4-H members learn specific project skills. 4-H members have fun with projects while "learning by doing." Youth remember better if they actually experience something and have an opportunity for some "hands-on learning."

Learning takes place within the learner – it is not something done to the learner. We encourage skills that will be useful to the youth in the future. We help each member develop good habits, experiment with new ideas, and practice problem-solving skills. By doing this, we help them become self-directed, productive, and contributing members of society.

❷ To teach 4-H members how to think, not what to think. We help develop creative thinking in young people by giving them a chance to make decisions on their own. They'll learn from their own choices.

❸ To recognize and encourage each 4-H member so they feel noticed and important. The most significant recognition that can be given to members is praise, attention, or compliments – letting them know they are important and what they have done is worthwhile.

**This is what 4-H is all about – the personal development of the 4-H member!**



**Welcome to the world of 4-H!**

# Reference Materials

*Letters to New Leaders: Contents*

## How can I use the information in this letter?

1. New activities to implement in our club program:

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2. Other People who could help us and how they might help:

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3. Questions to ask U.C. Cooperative Extension staff and other leaders.

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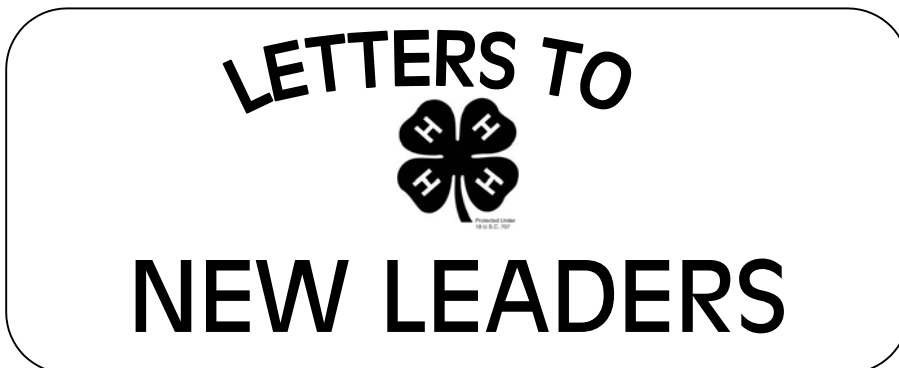
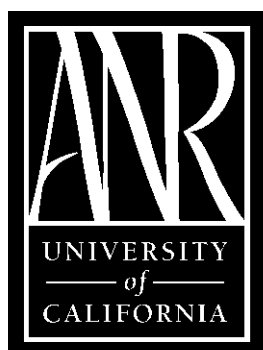
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## Letter 1: What is 4-H?

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