

## **Alabama 4-H Events General Policy**

The purpose of 4-H is to assist youth in realizing their potential and to help them develop a positive image of themselves. Through “learning by doing,” 4-H builds confidence and a feeling of accomplishment.

Alabama 4-H recognizes the total achievement of youth: Project Work, Leadership, and Community Service. All three components are *equally valuable*. Contests are only one small aspect of 4-H Project Work. Other elements of Project Work include such things as individual learning activities and attendance at workshops and special events.

### **Age Eligibility**

Age eligibility is determined by how old the young person is on January 1 of the current calendar year.

**Let’s say that this current calendar year is January 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011.**

#### **Age Divisions**

Junior: Must be 9, 10, 11, 12 or 13 years old on January 1, 2011.

[Junior Competition is on a local or regional basis only.]

Senior Level I: Must be 14 or 15 on January 1, 2011.

Senior Level II: Must be 16, 17, 18 or 19 on January 1, 2011.

### **The Role of Contests**

Contests are a celebration of what the young person has learned and the skills he or she has developed.

Contests, along with every other aspect of Alabama 4-H, are designed to support four *Essential Elements of Youth Development*:

#### **Belonging**

- 4-H provides a positive relationship with a caring adult.
- 4-H provides an environment where everyone feels included.
- 4-H provides a safe environment.

#### **Mastery**

- Youth are involved in the learning process.
- Youth have an opportunity to master skills.

### **Independence**

- Youth have an opportunity to feel that they have control over their future.
- Youth have an opportunity to pursue their own interests and abilities.

### **Generosity**

- Youth have an opportunity to value and practice service for others.

## **The Role of Recognition**

Recognition is a strategy to help youth become more capable and competent. Its only purpose is to inspire and encourage learning. Recognition supports learning by saluting each person's effort and positively reinforcing continued participation in learning.

**National 4-H Recognition Model** includes five types of recognition. It is important to provide appropriate recognition to all participants.

- Recognition for *involvement* is the first step.
- Recognition of *progress toward personal goals* helps teach goal-setting and self-assessment.
- Recognition of *achievement* recognizes *standards of excellence* and provides a set target.
- *Competition* is a strong motivation for some but not all young people. It is not appropriate for youth under age nine.
- Recognition for *cooperation* teaches teamwork and prepares youth for our global society.

A comprehensive recognition program can lead to more youth being recognized and can provide a way to say to every youth: "You are a valued and important member of the 4-H program."

## **Ribbon System**

Alabama 4-H draws from four approaches in awarding ribbons.

### **I. Danish System**

There is no special formula for the number of blue, red or white ribbons that are given. Quality (measured against set standards) and fulfillment of exhibit requirements determine the ranking. An accepted standard for ribbons are as follows:

**Blue:** Excellent. Meets or exceeds product standards or exhibit requirements; overall, the work is of high quality.

**Red:** Good. Meets product standards and exhibit requirements; overall the work is of good quality.

**White:** Acceptable. Some deficiencies in meeting product standards and/or exhibit requirements.

## **2. American System**

This is a rank order system in which exhibits are placed first--to--infinity. While the American system uses product standards and fulfillment of exhibit requirements, it also uses the idea of competition among peers to establish the ranking.

## **3. Participation System**

This system recognizes the exhibitor's participation in a category, usually without regard to the quality of the exhibit or competition among the exhibitors. This is often used with youth who are 5-8 years old

## **4. Top of Class**

This system (most likely seen in State Competition) recognizes that all participants are of superior quality. This allows the selection of "The Best of the Best" as determined by the judges. That may be termed "Top of Class," "Best of Show," "Grand Champion," etc.

## **Other Systems**

Combinations and modifications of these systems are used often. Also, such categories as "Most Creative" or other designations may be made, as determined by the event developers.

# **Judging**

(See Chapter VIII in *4-H 101* for Additional Information)

The purpose of judging is to provide young people with an evaluation of their work and suggestions for improvement. The primary purpose is to determine what is best not who is best.

## **Interview Judging or Score Sheets**

It is important that all participants get some feedback. This may come through the use of a score sheet or interaction with the judges. "Interview judging," in which the participant and the judges discuss the work, is the most desired method of helping youth evaluate their experiences and growth.

Youth may also be provided with feedback through score sheets. In Alabama, 4-H score sheets may have one or more of the following formats:

- Mathematical Scoring based on set criteria.
- Quality Rating such as Excellent, Good, Needs Improvement on set criteria.
- Quality Rating as determined by Mathematical Scoring.

## **Key Points:**

- Judges' decisions are final.
- Score sheets will be handed to the youth at the end of the event or after the awards are presented.

- Only the participating youth may raise questions or concerns about their placement or scoring.
- Judges may wish to speak with the gathered participants in general terms about the distinguishing characteristics of the top entrees.
- All events will seek to have three judges who have been appropriately trained.

## **Repeat Winners**

### **May Winners Repeat?**

Winners may only repeat in Freestyle Demonstration, Freestyle Showcase, Chef 4-H, Public Speaking and Healthy Living for Life. However, they must use original material, developed during the current 4-H year. It cannot be adapted from material which won in another category. Their work must be significantly different from material used to win previous contests.

Each set of contest guidelines has specific details on repeat winners, so those guidelines should be read carefully.

## **Team and Individual Entries**

Some contests allow both team and individual entries. Teams and individuals are judged concurrently, using the same criteria with no advantage or disadvantage on scoring. With this option, youth may choose whether they wish to work alone or with others, developing different skills and abilities. Because of their interests and personalities, some young people may choose the team approach while others may wish to be on a team.

The team approach allows young people to develop a different set of communications, planning, and leadership skills which reflect the “teamwork” emphasis generally found in the organizational setting. The opportunity to be on a team encourages many young people who would not otherwise be interested in participating.

## **Parents’ and Volunteers’ Guide**

All 4-H projects are just for young people. In the spirit of fair and honorable competition, it is expected that the young person take full ownership for every aspect of the project. The role of the adult helper is to support and encourage youth in their efforts, to ask and answer questions about the project, and to help youth learn specific techniques that they might use in their project.

## **Event Selection**

A young person may only compete in one event at regional and state competition, because of contest scheduling.