

Your Constitution and Bylaws

What Is the Purpose of the Constitution and Bylaws?

Each 4-H club is required to complete a constitution and bylaws. This document reflects the organization of the 4-H club. It describes when and where the club meets, who may join, what officers the club elects, and what the criteria are for a member to remain in good standing. Club constitutions and bylaws must contain a nondiscrimination statement. A copy of each club's constitution and bylaws must be on file with the county 4-H staff. If changes are made, a new copy must be sent to the 4-H staff.

Who Writes the Constitution and Bylaws?

The entire 4-H club is responsible for approving the constitution and bylaws. It is important that members, parents, volunteer leaders, and the organizational leader have input in the way the club is operated. Each year a committee of youth and adults should review the 4-H Club Constitution and Bylaws and update it as necessary.

Who Approves the Constitution and Bylaws?

It is the responsibility of the county 4-H staff to approve a club's constitution and bylaws. The 4-H staff should examine each club's constitution, bylaws, and operating procedures to determine that there are no constraints to membership, such as dues, uniform requirements, or required attendance of parents at meetings.

Why Is Communication Important?

At the beginning of the year, all members, parents, and leaders should know the requirements of the 4-H club. Special attention should be given to new members, parents, and leaders to make sure they are aware of what is expected of them. It is suggested that all new members receive a copy of the constitution and bylaws.

Why Are Language and Wording Important?

It is important how the constitution and bylaws are phrased. The entire membership must be able to understand and take ownership in this important document. Attempt to write from a positive viewpoint. For example, rather than writing "If a member misses three meetings, he or she is not in good standing and cannot exhibit at the fair" write "Members must attend seven meetings to remain in good standing. Members in good standing are eligible to exhibit at the fair."

The current nondiscrimination statement should be included in the bylaws:

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability.

Summary

Make sure 4-H members take an active role in writing the constitution and bylaws. All club rules and bylaws should be written to make operating the club easier. Write this document from a positive point of view.

Sample 4-H Club Constitution

This is just a sample. Your club has flexibility in developing a constitution and bylaws which reflect its needs and interests.

Article 1—Name

The name of this organization shall be the _____ 4-H club.

Article 2—Objective

The objective of this club is to aid in the development of its members through 4-H project work, club meetings, demonstrations, community service, club and county events, and other activities.

Article 3—Membership

Section 1. Boys and girls from all socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic groups who have completed the third grade and are under 19 years old before January 1 of the current club year are eligible for membership upon agreement to follow 4-H requirements.

Section 2. Boys and girls living in the following elementary school districts are eligible for membership in the 4-H club: _____, _____, and _____.

Article 4—Officers

The officers of this club shall be president, vice president, recording secretary, corresponding secretary, treasurer, reporter, song leader, recreation leader, sergeant at arms, and historian.

Article 5—Meetings

There shall be a minimum of eight regular meetings of the club each year. Officers and leaders may call special meetings when needed.

Article 6—Finances

Fund raising, bank accounts, and other financial matters will follow procedures set out by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

Article 7—Amendments

A two-thirds vote of the members present at any regular meeting is required to amend this Constitution.

Sample 4-H Club Bylaws

Article 1—Elections

Section 1. Officers shall be elected by ballot at the _____(month) meeting each year.

Section 2. A nominating committee consisting of a chair and four members will make its report to the club one month before the election.

Article 2—Duties of Officers

The **president** shall preside at all meetings of the club and have in mind at all times the best interests of the club. Executive meetings shall be called by the President before each meeting of the club.

The **vice president** shall perform the duties of the President in his or her absence. He or she shall serve as chair of the yearly program committee.

The **recording secretary** shall keep a record of all proceedings of the club and shall keep an accurate enrollment count of all members. The secretary shall submit a completed club secretary book that includes an up-to-date club constitution and bylaws to the county Cooperative Extension office by the county deadline.

The **corresponding secretary** shall act as correspondent in matters pertaining to the business of the club.

The **treasurer** shall receive and take care of all money belonging to the club and shall pay it out upon the order of the president. The treasurer shall also be the chair of the budget and finance committee. The treasurer will submit a completed club treasurer's book to the county Extension office by the county deadline.

The **reporter** shall write news reports of all meetings and activities and send them to the local newspapers.

The **recreation leader** shall be responsible for the recreation period at club meetings and special events.

The **sergeant at arms** shall be expected to maintain order of all members at each meeting.

The **historian** shall keep an accurate scrapbook of all local club news and events, as well as countywide and statewide events.

Article 3—Committees

Committees will be appointed by the president. The committee shall consist of a chair, co-chair, and enough members to carry through the specific assignment.

Article 4—Membership

Section 1. Membership responsibilities are the following:

- 1) Complete enrollment card and return to local 4-H leader.
- 2) Pay insurance fee.
- 3) Enroll in one or more projects.
- 4) Attend local club meetings and project meetings.
- 5) Keep 4-H records.
- 6) Participate in local and county 4-H events.
- 7) Agree to follow the 4-H Code of Conduct.
- 8) Agree to abide by project or club agreements, if used.

Article 5—Meetings

Section 1. The regular meeting of the club shall take place on the _____ of each month. Special meetings may be called by the president with the consent of the club leader.

Section 2. Members shall be required to regularly attend club meetings and project meetings in accordance with the requirements set by the club and the project leader.

Section 3. Excused absences will be given for illness and other reasons agreed upon by local leaders, provided they are reported to the president or club leaders before the local club meeting or to the project leader before the project meeting.

Article 6—Program of Work

The written plan of work for the year shall be adopted not later than the third meeting of the club year.

Article 7—Amendment of Bylaws

These bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of the members present at any regular meeting.

Article 8—Record Books

4-H records are valuable learning tools and members are encouraged to keep records of their 4-H experiences. Records are not required to re-enroll in 4-H, but they may be used to verify completion of a project and to earn credit for completing a year in 4-H.

Article 9—Project Competition

The project leader shall determine if a member has completed a project. The project leader's signature on the project report form indicates project completion.