

Ohio State University Fact Sheet

State 4-H Office

2120 Fyffe Rd., Columbus, OH 43210-1084

Designing a 4-H Club Constitution and By-laws

4H-025-99

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The foundation of any successful organization, club, or government is a workable constitution and by-laws. The constitution is designed to be the base foundation and is usually not amended. Information in it should be general, yet firm enough to establish strength for the group. The by-laws are designed to be easily amended and are the working document for the club.

What Are the Benefits?

Everyone in the club gets the opportunity to participate in the creation of these documents. Member involvement in creating these documents is an excellent way to develop interest, leadership, writing skills, and decision making skills. A constitution and by-laws that are well developed, have the principle of providing courtesy and justice to all, partiality to none, willingness of the membership to support the club, and the right for the minority to be heard at meetings.

Getting Started Creating the Constitution and By-laws

The design committee shall consist of 4-H club members, junior/teen leaders, adult volunteers, and community adults (4-H alumni, parents, or community leaders). Adults should only serve as advisors to the team of youth who will be the creators and designers. Develop each document on separate evenings keeping the group focused on just one task.

After each document is drafted, the drafted form should be distributed to the entire 4-H club membership for input and changes that are desired. A final vote shall be taken at a 4-H club meeting for the purpose of ratification of these documents only. Conduct no other business so the group will remain focused on the importance of these documents.

Step 1: Create the constitution and by-laws foundation

The constitution shall be designed to be a long standing document with concrete information. The constitution should include the following important articles in this order:

Article I- Name of 4-H Club; Article II-Purpose of 4-H Club; Article III-Membership of 4-H Club; Article IV-Officers, Duties, and Terms; Article V-Meetings of 4-H Club; and Article VI-Amendments.

The by-laws shall be designed to be flexible and easy for revisions based on changes in the 4-H club. The by-laws should include the following important articles in this order:

Article I-Name and Principal Location of the 4-H Club;

Article II-Membership of the 4-H Club;
Article III-Meetings of the 4-H Club;
Article IV-Officers of the 4-H Club;
Article V-Committees of the 4-H Club;
Article VI-Agenda of the 4-H Club Meetings;
and Article VII-Amendments.

Each new item listed under each article shall be a new section with a number in both documents. This is for easy reference, for clarification, and to make changes.

Step 2: Draw a blueprint for the foundation

The work on the blueprints for the constitution and by-laws foundation should take place in a room where there are no distractions. The adult volunteer and committee chair should have several sheets of flip chart paper attached to the walls of the room with the title of the article already written at the top of each sheet. The committee should sit in a circle facing each other so interaction can take place. All suggestions should be recorded on the flip chart. The maximum time for the meeting should be one hour. Create the constitution, then the by-laws.

Step 3: Voting on the constitution and by-laws

Once the documents have been accepted by the standing committee, the created documents are to be mailed to every family prior to the meeting for them to review at home. At the specially called meeting, the committee chair will read aloud each article one at a time and ask for discussion. The chair should limit debate to a set time for each article so meeting doesn't drag on or get bogged down. Adoption will be voted on at the next regularly called meeting. By doing this everyone can think about suggested changes before voting, so nothing is rushed. At the final vote, the chair asks for a motion to accept each article individually with a second and a vote preferably by ballot, roll call, or hand. After the last article is past, the group votes to accept the whole constitution, then the by-laws.

Model Draft of a Constitution

! Article I - Name

Section 1. Name of 4-H Club shall be _____.

! Article II - Purpose

The primary purpose of the 4-H Club shall be to:

Section 1. (3 - 5 items from committee)

! Article III - Membership

Membership is for young ladies and gentlemen , (age clause set by state).

! Article IV - Officers, Duties, Terms

Section 1. The officers of the 4-H Club shall consist of: (List of officers)

Section 2. The duties of the officers shall be defined in the by-laws.

Section 3. The terms of the officers shall be defined in the by-laws.

! Article V - Meetings

One regular annual achievement meeting will be held. All other meetings shall be called as specified in the by-laws.

! Article VI - Amendments

! Amendments to the Constitution shall be made by a 2/3 majority vote of the 4-H Club

members present at any regularly called meeting.

Date of Adoption:

Model Draft of By-Laws

! Article I - Name and Location

Section 1. Name of 4-H Club shall be _____

Section 2. Location of 4-H Club meetings

! Article II - Membership

Section 1. Cloverbuds

Section 2. 4-H Members

Section 3. Residency of members

! Article III - Meetings

Section 1. Annual Achievement Meeting

Section 2. Regular Meetings (minimum number)

Section 3. Special Meetings

Section 4. Location of Meetings (day, time, place)

Section 5. Notice of Meetings (phone, written, etc)

Section 6. Quorum at Meetings

Section 7. Use of Parliamentary Procedure

Section 8. Voting (list forms to be used)

! Article IV - Officers

Section 1. Election of officers

Section 2. Duties of President

Section 3. Duties of Vice President

Section 4. Duties of Secretary

Section 5. Duties of Treasurer

Section 6. Duties of Health and Safety

Section 7. Duties of News Reporter

Section 8. Duties of Recreation Leader

Section 9. Vacancies of officers

Section 10. Removal from office

! Article V - Committees

Section 1. Executive or Officers

Section 2. Awards

Section 3. Constitution and By-Laws

Section 4. Community Service

Section 5. Fund Raising

Section 6. Membership

Section 7. Nominating

Section 8. Program Planning

! Article VI - Meeting Agenda

(Basic meeting agenda)

! Article VII - Amendments

The by-laws may be amended at any regular or special meeting of the 4-H Club by a majority vote of those present.

Adoption Date:

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