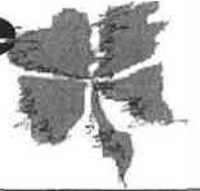




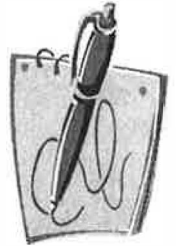
Mindy Denny, 4-H Specialist- Home Economics
New Mexico State University, State 4-H Office
PO Box 30003, MSC 3AE, Las Cruces, NM 88003
(505) 646-1166 Fax (505) 646-3027 email: midenny@nmsu.edu



How to Write a 4-H Story



- A good story helps the judge get to know the 4-H Member! It shows growth over the 4-H career. This is not just a repeat of the report form. The 4-H Story is best told by the 4-H Member.
- The Report Form tells **what** you did, the Story tells **why** you did it and **how you felt** about it. This also allows you to tell what you **will** do.
- The 4-H Story may be no longer than six pages. It is to be double spaced in a font not smaller than 12 point with at least 1" margins and only on one side of the page. (A senior member story should be **at least** four pages long.) A good rule of thumb is to have a page for every year the member has been in 4-H, up to six pages.
- The 4-H Story is a **personal narrative** of your growth in 4-H, the goals you've set and reached, what these experiences have meant to you, or how 4-H has impacted your life. Tell how your 4-H experience has affected your family, community and others. You may wish to use a theme to tie all the activities together. Be creative; make the story sound as if you were telling a friend about 4-H, your goals and dreams, how you overcame defeat or handled success. Add touches of humor or quotes from people who have encouraged you.



Writing Your Story

Here is a suggested format for your story, with the basic outline.

Part I- Introduce yourself- remember, people are reading your story that do not know you at all. Include your age, interests, parents, brothers and sisters, where you live, where you go to school, grade, etc. You can always include an attention getting paragraph before your introduction- one suggestion is to use a funny 4-H incident.

Part II- Tell about the projects in which you are enrolled. Why did you choose these projects? What have you learned in the projects? How did you finance your projects? What was your favorite activity in 4-H?

Part III- Explain how 4-H has helped you become a better citizen and leader. Include offices held, committees served on, and what you have learned working with other 4-H members.

Part IV- Describe how 4-H has influenced you. Tell about school, goals, careers, and future plans.

Conclusion- Don't forget to end your story! This may be a summary or a final statement, but it should leave no doubt that your story is complete.

Story Writing Tips

- ✓ Avoid a year-by-year listing of what you did. Don't save the best for last, put it near the beginning to catch the reader's interest. Try to find a theme to tie all your activities together and show how you reached specific goals
- ✓ Show the human interest side of 4-H- how has it changed you, your family, and your community? Be specific- explain what you mean when you say something was "great" or "wonderful." Don't use slang- you are writing for adults. Ask someone else to read your story to check for mistakes and clarity- if something is unclear, rewrite it!
- ✓ Tell about the skills learned and changes in attitudes and habits. Tell in your own words about those experiences that have been meaningful and why they were meaningful.
- ✓ The story is not a listing of projects completed and honors won. These things may be mentioned, but they are not the "meat" of the story! **PROOFREAD!!** Proofread yourself and have someone else proofread as well. Look for the following:

- Did you begin each sentence with a capital letter?
- Did you use end marks correctly?
- Did you spell each word correctly?
- Did you write each idea in a complete sentence?
- Did you use commas correctly?
- Did you begin each proper name with a capital letter?
- Did you indent each paragraph?

Getting started is the hardest part! Get with fellow 4-H members, or have a brainstorming session at your club meeting, to come up with a catchy beginning. Some examples might be:

"Are you on a first name basis with 200 insects? Well, thanks to what I've learned in the 4-H Entomology Project, I am."

"When is a pig more than a pig, when it is a 4-H Project!"

References: *The Complete Guide to Record Books*, University of California-Cooperative Extension;
Volunteer Leader Training Guide- Writing a 4-H Story, University of Arkansas