

About 4-H Ceremonies

Ceremonies have always had a place of special importance in society and organizations. In 4-H they are a celebration of special occasions that club leaders and members feel are important. Examples of a few common 4-H ceremonies are included here.

Why Use a Ceremony?

Ceremonies are used to highlight or recognize special accomplishments and goal attainment. They can be used:

- To convey a message or lesson
- To challenge and inspire all the members to reach greater heights in personal growth and the 4-H organization

A ceremony must convey that "you" and "this moment" are special. To achieve these goals, a ceremony must be more than a ritual – it must be a communication of the 4-H members' thoughts and feelings about their ideas. The ceremony must say something that matters.

Ceremonies can:

- Meet a greater part of the youth's basic fundamental needs for personal growth
- Provide peer interaction and recognition
- Encourage positive self-discovery through exploring new social roles
- Create a feeling of affiliation with and acceptance by an ever expanding circle of acquaintances

Group loyalty and personal identity are enhanced by the formal membership and reinforced by the use of ceremonies. Recognition is a basic human need that is more meaningful when it is presented in front of "significant others" – peers, family and friends. When planned and executed properly, a ceremony can allow for all these things.

When Should a Ceremony Be Used?

A ceremony can and should be used anytime a member has completed a goal, made a special accomplishment, achieved a rite of passage or been recognized for any noteworthy task. In other words, a ceremony should be used whenever a member or leader does something that a leader or teacher feels should be recognized or when he or she is taking on a new challenge. The accomplishments on the part of the group should also be recognized by ceremonies. There is no defined time or place for a ceremony. Different times and locations for similar ceremonies help to make the recognition more special to all involved.

How Do You Plan a Ceremony?

Certain considerations must be made in planning a meaningful ceremony.

• Theme

A concept or idea around which the ceremony is built. It is most effective when they can be linked to something current or to an issue that the member can relate. Let the members of your club brainstorm together to come up with a theme. Use their ideas and help them by giving guidance and encouraging comments.

• Message

The message will be different depending on the purpose of the particular ceremony. It is important to develop a message and then build on the message throughout the ceremony. When creating

the message keep the following question in mind: What would you like the members to learn or do as a result of participating in the ceremony? For instance, you may want to inspire them to do more good work to reach their goals. Take care not to lose the special message of the ceremony. By stressing the message during the entire program, participants and observers will be aware of the purpose and reason for the ceremony.

- **Focus**

A center of focus is a must in creating a meaningful ceremony. The center of activity should contain a symbolic feature or simple object to catch and hold the members' attention. Actions performed during the ceremony should be simple and occur around the focal point (i.e., a 4-H emblem, a book or a flag).

- **Program**

The essence of the ceremony is the program. The two major parts of the program are the characters and the narration. These two elements provide the message, purpose and recognition for the ceremony.

- **Characters of the Ceremony**

Those who have speaking parts should be carefully selected. They should rehearse their parts so they can deliver them in normal tones with appropriate expression. Frequent pauses and slow reading can be very effective. If the ceremony includes individual statements, it is important to help the person recite his part so that it sounds natural. Memorized monotone or halting reading can make a ceremony meaningless.

- **Script**

If a script is used, it should be timed coincide with the action at the center of activities. If there are parts to be acted out, rehearsal is a must. This will ensure that all props are in working order.

- **Narration**

The narration contains the heart of the message and must be composed to take full advantage of the setting and symbolism depicted by the center of focus. Background music during a narration can be very effective and add to the ceremony.

- **Setting**

The nature of the occasion will help to determine the place and atmosphere that is best suited for the particular ceremony. Take advantage of the area where the ceremony is held. Be creative!

- **Dramatic Effects**

Use of dramatic effects can be a real asset to any ceremony. Swelling the music, lowering the lights, lighting candles, starting the campfire, getting the flag to ripple in the breeze of a fan, uncovering an object on a table, building a model and many other simple, easy gestures catch the attention of the group. Every ceremony should have a high point where the greatest impact will be felt by the audience. This should be near the end.

- **Mood**

Set the mood by making the transition from fun activities to the ceremony itself. In creating the proper mood for the program, it is a necessity for the group to be in a proper mind set. To make the transition, shift the attention of the group to a different setting. Use mood changers. Use your imagination and you will find unique ways to set the proper mood.

- **Ending**

The ending is just as important as the beginning. Design it to compliment the whole program and help reinforce the message of the ceremony in the minds and hearts of the participants. When the ending begins, it should be obvious that the special moment is complete. Use an effect to end the ceremony.

Who Should Plan a Ceremony?

The leader of the group should not have sole responsibility for planning ceremonies. The planning should involve members of the group and assistants to the leader who recruit the needed help. If you know someone who would be good at this type of planning, encourage him or her to develop an idea. There may be a parent in your group with many creative ideas as well. Form a committee within the club to concentrate on and plan ceremonies. One often gains more in planning the ceremony than in participating in the actual ceremony. Adults should be there to help the members of the group, but they should encourage the members to do the planning themselves.

Where Do I Start?

It will be easy to write a script if you organize it in this manner:

- Introduction: Remember that its purpose is to get, and hold attention
- Body: Develop your main theme or idea here and build it toward a ...
- Climax or Summary: Connect all the ideas together so that the ceremony will be remembered and significant to all. This can be done by impressive statements, the lighting of candles, the singing of an inspiring song or even a moment of silence when each formulates their own thoughts based on something just said or done

What Advance Preparations Must Be Made?

Rehearse the ceremony so that those taking part will be relaxed and comfortable as it is presented. Choose individuals with major parts carefully. They should have good, clear voices and should be able to put expression and meaning into parts.

Assemble or move props well in advance. Involve members who are not on the ceremony committee in the preparation of props – if the audience is to be involved in any way – make sure they have the needed materials.

Things to Remember

- Determine the purpose and choose a theme
- Assemble resource materials
- Write a script or find an appropriate ceremony already written
- Decide who will be included
- Delegate responsibility
- Consider setting or atmosphere needed
- Assemble props and equipment
- Rehearse as needed
- Keep it simple, impressive and interesting

Admission of New Members

This ceremony can be used when new members join your 4-H Club. The club president asks candidates for membership to come to the front of the room and stand facing the officers who are standing behind a table.

President

To you who are about to become a member of the 4-H club, we wish to explain the purposes of our organization. 4-H clubs are organized to make us better citizens by teaching us to work and play together, by giving us the means for learning worthwhile skills and developing talents, and by encouraging us to set standards and goals which challenge us. 4-H clubs are a national organization with headquarters in the United States Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. All state, commonwealth, territory and county Extension Services cooperate to make 4-H work available to boys and girls from age 5 to 19.

Vice President

The national emblem of the 4-H clubs is the green four-leaf clover, with the four white "H"s, one in each leaf, signifying the training of the Head, Heart, Hands and Health. Our motto – "To Make the Best Better" – asks us to improve ourselves with each job that we undertake. Our colors are green and white. Green is nature's most common color and stands for springtime, youth and growth. White symbolizes purity and high ideals.

Secretary

Each new 4-H member accepts certain responsibilities along with the privileges of membership. We ask each club member to:

- *Attend meetings regularly*
- *Take an active part in 4-H events*
- *To work to attain self-selected goals in the project selected*
- *Keep project record up to date and turn it in at end of the year*
- *Be a worthy representative of 4-H at all times.*

You now know the purpose, motto, emblem and colors of 4-H. Will you promise to live up to these purposes, to take part in the affairs of this club and to further its interest in every way possible?

Candidate

I will.

President

Will you join with the active 4-H Club members in repeating our club pledge?

I pledge:

My Head to clearer thinking,

My Heart to greater loyalty,

My Hands to larger service and

My Health to better living,

For my club, my community, my country and my world.

President

We are happy to have you as a new member of the 4-H Club.

President goes down the line shaking hands with each new member. If this is the last item of business, members and leaders will want to come forward and welcome the new members.

Induction of New Members

This ceremony can be used at local or county 4-H meetings to welcome new members and inform them of the purposes of the 4-H club. The group of new members assemble at the front of the room before the officers of the local club or the county federation.

President

To you who are about to become members of the (name) 4-H club, welcome. In order that you may have a full understanding of 4-H work, it is necessary that you learn more about the purposes of our organization. The officers here assembled will help me explain to you the meaning of 4-H work. Listen attentively as each speaks, so that you will be able to carry out obligations you are assuming as a member of the (name) 4-H Club.

Vice-President

4-H clubs are organizations of boys and girls formed for the purpose of learning more about how to develop into productive members of society. 4-H had its beginning in rural America with an emphasis on farming and homemaking. It has since expanded to urban and suburban areas and currently has members across all parts of the country. The 4-H Club is democracy in action. It teaches cooperation in work and play in the home, in the club, and in the community. It helps us solve our problems in actual situations. It gives us an appreciation of the value of life.

Secretary (Exhibit a 4-H emblem)

The 4-H Club emblem is a green four-leaf clover with a white "H" on each leaf. The "H"s symbolize the four-fold development of Head, Heart, Hands, and Health. Our motto is "To Make the Best Better."

Reporter

Every loyal 4-H member carries out the work of a project under the guidance of a local leader. He or she attends meetings of the local club and contributes to the program when called upon to do so. Members finish what they start. They win without boasting and lose without complaining. They help others and, in turn, receive help from others when it is needed.

President

You have heard what 4-H means and what you must do to become a member. Are you willing to live up to the ideals symbolized by the four "H"s?

New Member(s)

I am.

President

Do you wish to become a 4-H member?

New Member(s)

I do.

President

As an indication of your appreciation of the privilege of living in this land, the United States of America, it is important that you, with other 4-H members, take the pledge of citizenship. Will you repeat after me this pledge?

All Together

We, individually and collectively, pledge our efforts from day to day to protect the ideals of our nation from those who would destroy them.

We will never allow tyranny and injustice to become enthroned in this our country through indifference to our duties as citizens.

We will defend the democratic way of life against the inroads of insidious falsehoods.

We will obey the laws of our land and endeavor to quicken the sense of public duty among our fellow men.

We will strive for the social betterment of our communities and the enrichment of our homes.

We will endeavor to transmit this nation to those who follow us, not merely as we found it, but freer, happier and more beautiful than it was when transmitted to us.

President

And now, as a sign of your intention to live up to the meaning and opportunities of 4-H membership, will you please repeat after me the 4-H pledge.

Everyone repeats after the president

I pledge:

My Head to clearer thinking.

My Heart to greater loyalty.

My Hands to larger service and

My Health to better living for my club, my community, my country and my world.

You are now a member of the (name) 4-H club. May you ever be faithful in carrying out the pledge you have just repeated, always striving in your everyday relationships with your parents, schoolmates and neighbors to live up to its high ideals.

Fellow members, I present to you the new members of our 4-H Club. (Gives names.) We will close this ceremony by singing the first verse of "America the Beautiful."

Installing Officers

(Hands Theme)

Narrator

Many figures of speech are often heard in our daily conversations that center around our hands:

- *When we are extremely busy, "our hands are full."*
- *If a situation is impossible, we say it is "out of our hands" or that "our hands are tied."*
- *If we have no hand in service, we have "no hand in the matter."*
- *If something has been used before, it is "second hand."*
- *If we stand beside someone we are "at their right hand."*
- *Something within reach is "at hand" or under control, it is "in hand."*
- *"On the other hand" refers to the opposite point of view.*
- *One of the four "H"s in 4-H relates to the hand. "I pledge my hands to larger service" indicates that 4-Hers "learn by doing."*

Our hands reveal many things about us. They sometimes indicate the kind of work we do. They often express our moods. They indicate whether our nerves are shaky or steady.

The hands are used as a means of communication. We have all observed a deaf person who "talks" with their hands. We, who can speak with our voice, also frequently speak with our hands. With our hands we ask, we grant permission, we silence and dismiss, we threaten, we greet, we bid goodbye, we pledge and we promise. With our hands we express grief, joy and love. We must have clean hands; we must have busy hands.

The (name) 4-H Club will change hands today. For the past year the club has been in good hands. And so to the retiring officers, we pause to pay tribute as they relinquish their duties and responsibilities to other hands. Let's give them a big hand.

(Entire 4-H club applauds.)

Everyone in a 4-H club is important to its success. The members, leaders, junior leaders, parents and officers all contribute to a successful 4-H club in which each member learns something and has fun.

4-H club officers-elect, you have been chosen by the members of your club as officers for the coming year. This is an honor and a big responsibility. Strong and dedicated officers are most important to the success of a 4-H Club. You have the responsibility of preserving the honor and dignity of 4-H and your club.

Good officers are honest, sincere, dependable, friendly and loyal. They let the members of the club help make decisions. Good officers get things done right and on time. They are proud of their jobs and always do their best. It is your duty to conduct yourself so you will serve as an example for other members in your club. Good officers pledge their "hands" to the service of their 4-H Club. If you are willing to accept these responsibilities, the confidence and trust given to you by your fellow club members, please come forward as your name and office is called and be duly initiated into your office.

Health and Safety Officer

(Name), health and safety officer, please come forward. It is your responsibility to make sure our 4-H club is aware of health and safety factors in our everyday lives. Make a special effort to consider the health and safety of all individuals in every undertaking of your club. 4-H members need to be more health and safety conscious. These two topics should be part of the 4-H meeting. Remember, one of the four H's is health. Good health and safety programs will assure 4-H'ers full use of their "hands" now and in the future.

If you accept the responsibility of this office, extend your hands and state "I pledge my hands in service of the (name) 4-H Club."

Recreation Chairperson

(Name), recreation chairperson, please come forward. You have the responsibility to plan games and other recreation for the club. Recreation should be suitable for the age group, space and time available. Your programs should be varied and your games simple and easy, with a chance for everyone to get involved. Education and fun can go together and this is your responsibility. Be a good "hand" as you lead your club in recreation.

If you accept the responsibility of this office, extend your hands and state "I pledge my hands in service for the (name) 4-H Club."

News Reporter

(Name), news reporter, please come forward. It is your job to inform others about (name of club)___ activities and achievements. You can do much to increase interest in 4-H by writing articles about club meetings and special events for the newspaper. Keep a scrapbook of all news items and make this year's events a part of the club history. The awareness of your 4-H club efforts by the people in this community and county largely depends on the job you do. Let wisdom and knowledge guide your "hands" as you report the activities of your 4-H Club.

If you accept the responsibility of this office, extend your hands and state "I pledge my hands in service of the (name) 4-H Club."

Secretary

(Name), secretary, please come forward. You are responsible for keeping accurate minutes of all meetings. You will be prepared to read these minutes at the next meeting, call the roll, keep attendance and handle all club correspondence your duties. May your "hands" be full as you keep accurate records of your 4-H club.

If you accept the responsibility of this office, extend your hands and state "I pledge my hands in service of the (name) 4-H Club."

Treasurer

(Name), treasurer, please come forward. Be aware that you must receive and be responsible for all club money. You must keep an accurate record of all money received and its source, all money paid and to whom and for what. Paying bills only when approved by the club and giving a treasurer's report at club meeting are part of your important responsibilities. You should be efficient and resourceful so that all club financial matters will be "in hand."

If you accept the responsibility of this office, extend your hands and state "I pledge my hands in service of the (name) 4-H Club."

Vice President

(Name), vice president, please come forward. Your duty is to provide guidance and counsel to all committees as they make plans and decisions. You will work closely with the president, leaders and other officers in planning all club activities. Remember. You must preside at meetings in the temporary absence of the president. You are the right "hand" of the president.

If you accept the responsibility of this office, extend you hands and state: "I pledge my hands in service of the (name) 4-H Club."

President

(Name), president, please come forward. The (name) 4-H Club has paid you a very high compliment, the highest honor they can bestow, that of being president of the club. It is your duty to call the meeting to order, preside and direct the business meeting. Encourage all members to take an active part, work closely with your leader and represent the entire club. The enthusiasm and effectiveness of this 4-H club will depend largely on how well you conduct your responsibilities. Into your hands, your club has placed authority. May your "hands" be busy and unselfish.

If you accept the responsibility of this office, extend your hands and state "I pledge my hands in service of the (name) 4-H Club."

Narrator

4-H club officers, I congratulate you on the honor that your fellow club members have bestowed upon you. This honor brings additional responsibilities. You will need to think clearly so you will know what is best for your club. You must plan wisely so your club will grow in interest and usefulness. I declare you duly installed officers of the (name) 4-H Club.

Congratulations and best wishes. May your hands lead others into brighter paths of membership. Will the members and leaders of the (name) 4-H Club please join your officers by standing? I congratulate you on the choices you have made. Now that you have elected these officers to guide and direct this club, it is your duty to aid them in every way possible. Many "hands" working together will assure a successful 4-H club. Pledge your support to help them perform their duties. The officers cannot do their jobs well without the assistance of the entire club. Many "hands" working together will help your officers realize the 4-H motto – "to make the best better" – for every member in the (name) 4-H Club.

As we conclude the installation ceremony. I ask that everyone join in saying the 4-H pledge. Let this pledge be the guiding light of our 4-H club for the coming year.

I pledge:

*My Head to clearer thinking,
My Heart to greater loyalty,
My Hands to larger service and
My Health to better living, for my club, my community, my country and my world.*

Candle Ceremony Installation of Officers

For the Candle Installation, use different colors of candles representing each office. For safety, put candles in a votive cup or candle holder. Colored ribbon tied around each cup or candle holder makes them look attractive and is much easier to hold onto than just the plain candle. To begin this ceremony the narrator should ask all the new officers to assemble at the front of the room. Select the officers from the list below that fit your club structure.

Narrator

Leaders have come and gone and great things have come to pass during the past years. The past leaders who were responsible for this organization were young people who wanted great things to come from the 4-H program. They were willing to give their all to see that the ideas of their organization were upheld. Today, we are to install the new leaders of our organization. The ones who have gone before and the members today offer the challenge to accept the responsibility to see that the work of our organization is carried forward to new heights and goals.

President (white candle)

Your tasks are few. Just tell the others what to do. Preside at all meetings and call the Board. Help get ideas to guide the horde. Appoint committees and chairmen. Do a hundred little things we have not time to pen. Keep smiling and sweet whatever you do and each member's good wishes will come to you. Now, into the hands of the one who leads, I put this white candle with promised deeds of love and devotion from all of us here, as you guide the (club) 4-H Club in a bright new year. (Light candle.)

Vice President (red candle)

You are the dean of departments of the work to do. With all the programs it will be up to you to see that (name) 4-H Club never fails to give aid. The public's gratitude will make you well paid. This candle of red is yours to hold. The president expects you to do all that you're told. (Light candle.)

Treasurer (yellow candle)

As treasurer, you will write all checks to keep 4-H from the awful plight of bills unpaid, and record monies collected as directed. This candle of yellow, the color of gold, foretells all the wealth your hands will hold. (Light candle.)

Secretary (blue candle)

You have work to do – to write down everything is up to you. To keep all motions straight – who moved, who seconds – and what the debate was all about. This candle of blue is yours as a wage: You are the keeper of the written page. (Light candle.)

Recruitment Chairperson (rose candle)

Your task must be a pleasure and so easy to do, as you tell prospective members what wonderful things 4-H can do. As you light this candle of rose, let it be a light to this organization as its membership grows. (Light candle.)

Recreation Chairperson (green candle)

It would be fine if you could go all year and say no more, but be advised that there will be work galore, Christmas in October and more. This candle of green, I give to you, for you will need imagination and patience, too. (Light candle.)

Citizenship or Community Service Chairperson (orange candle)

You've encouraged us to be proud of the red, white and blue and be of service to our families and communities; as you light this candle of orange, may it be a symbol of caution, and symbol of safety, which you have taught us, too. (Light candle.)

Program Chairperson (peach candle)

Help club members work to make a happy, healthy club within our reach, as you light your candle of peach. The color blends with others so well, so do our members, we are proud to tell. (Light candle.)

International Chairperson (purple candle)

Lead us to a knowledge of countries of the world as you light this candle of purple – the symbol of kings. Be our ambassadors so we may learn many new things. (Light candle.)

Junior Leaders (pink candle)

While you light this candle of love, fragile pink, recall the ideas you can share, as you guide young members as they mold their future with care. (Light candle.)

News Reporters (brown candle)

As you light this candle, the last one, of a very rich brown, be reminded that your responsibility is to spread the good news of 4-H by newspapers, pictures, radio in your town. Keep the public aware that 4-H is here to stay. We are like the rich brown earth, here to promote growth every day. (Light candle.)

The challenge is real. The challenge is great. Upon you rests the responsibility of carrying the 4-H club light forward so that your homes and communities flourish because of it. That as 4-H members you are inspired to new achievements.

Members, may I present to you the new officers of (name) 4-H Club for the year.

Congratulations and best wishes.