Communication Arts

Why should a 4-H’er participate?

- To learn to express thoughts verbally
- To learn to think through a series of steps
- To learn to organize work in logical order
- To learn more about a topic
- To gain poise and self-confidence

Communication Skills are almost always listed in the top five job skills and qualities employers look for... Communication Arts is a great way to prove that youth have the skills employers are looking for!

Other Resources

The following curriculum may be obtained from the 4-H Mall:

Communications 1 – Picking Up the Pieces: Youth engage in nonverbal, verbal, and written activities that stretch and strengthen personal communication skills. Encrypting codes, writing songs, giving directions, dealing with bullies, and making a statement through art are a few of the exciting activities.

Communications 2 - Putting It Together: Youth practice and gain confidence in communicating in a variety of situations. They gain confidence as strong communicators as they present oral reasons, plan and present speeches, communicate assertively, practice making a good first impression and mentor others.

Communications 3 – The Perfect Fit: Youth polish their communication skills and develop a public presence by speaking in public, exploring communication careers, writing resumes, interviewing for a job, developing presentations, dealing with anxiety and much more!

Communications Group Activity Helper’s Guide: Helpers support youth as they interact, and strengthen personal communication skills through skill-a-thons, communication games, demonstrations and creating advertisements.

Communications Toolkit: Fun Skill-Building Activities: The toolkit provides fun, easy and meaningful communication activities for many youth settings. Hands-on activities help kids build on their skills in public speaking, writing, graphics, and video, media and technology. This curriculum item may be obtained from: Michigan State University

What is Communication Arts?

The North Dakota 4-H Communication Arts program has five primary objectives:

- To help participants develop communication skills that are useful throughout a lifetime
- To provide participants an opportunity to practice their skills before a group
- To provide participants an opportunity to gather and organize information, equipment and props for public presentation
- To develop participants’ confidence in making public presentations
- To evaluate and enhance communication skills

Participation begins at the club or local level, where youth should be encouraged to give at least one public presentation each year.

Each county is encouraged to conduct a communication arts event in which all youth can participate each year. Youth can move on to district contests to win medals and other prizes. It includes two age divisions: the preteen division (youth 8 to 12 years old) and the teen division (youth ages 13 to 18).

How can a 4-H Leader help?

With careful planning, leaders can assign demonstrations to help teach the topics selected for each meeting. Challenge the members to continually improve their presenting ability. Have a group project in which members teach other members the steps of the project.

Giving extra encouragement, keeping topic simple and within their abilities, make sure the other members give due respect and attention to presenters. Team presentations are a great way to help youth gain the confidence to present.

There are many different opportunities 4-H’ers have to actively practice their speaking skills during a club meeting: giving a demonstration or illustrated talk, assuming the role of an officer, giving a committee report, leading and teaching recreation, and leading pledges. Some more advanced opportunities for youth include: becoming a camp counselor, being a style revue commentator at a local contests, announcing a show at a county fair, taking on a 4-H Ambassador role, speaking to civic organizations about 4-H, emceeing a program, participating in radio/television interviews, or teaching 4-H workshop or clinic.

There are several key resources to helping you teach about communication. Encourage participation in the local Communication Arts event by hosting a day to help youth select and organize their presentation.
What’s the difference between:

Demonstrations and Illustrated Talks?
In a demonstration, the presenter shows “how something works” or “how to do something” by using objects and explaining the steps.

In an illustrated talk, the presenter explains “how something works” or “how to do something,” but does not actually show the working object or demonstrate the process; instead they use visual aids to complement their talk.

Interpretive Reading (Humorous or Serious) and Dramatic Presentations?
In interpretive readings, contestants use vocal and facial expressions to communicate the author’s thoughts expressively. Visual aids, tapes or costumes are not permitted.

In dramatic presentations, full body movements, costumes, makeup and/or props are used to perform pieces in a creative, thought provoking manner.

Commercial and Demonstrations?
Commercials are intended to demonstrate the ability to sell an item/project/idea. The end result should sway the audience to want more of the item/project/idea.

In a demonstration, the presenter shows “how something works” or “how to do something” by using objects and explaining the steps. It should remain unbiased from the audience perspective.

Presentation Software and Illustrated Talks?
Presentation software uses current or new software to help an audience understand a presentation. The design and software techniques are evaluated.

In an illustrated talk, the presenter explains “how something works” or “how to do something,” by using visual aids to complement their talk. However, the talk is evaluated on the content.

Remember to teach:
- You want to succeed.
- The audience wants you to succeed.
- The judges want you to succeed. They are not there to trick you, only to support your effort.

What about Cloverbuds?
A “recitation only” category is often offered for Cloverbuds at Communication Arts events. This category is noncompetitive and provides equal recognition for all participants.

This optional category provides young participants an opportunity to make presentations without the task of finding or writing material and without the stress of competition. Recitation of the 4-H Pledge, Pledge of Allegiance or other simple verse is appropriate.

Demonstration: Demonstrations are presentations that reflect skills and procedures on all topics. They show “how to do something,” “how to make something” or “how something works” and may display a finished product.

Illustrated Talk: Illustrated talks are speeches using visual aids. They are presentations in which charts, posters, figures or real objects are used to explain an idea or procedure.

Prepared Speech: Prepared speeches include the presentation of speeches that are composed by the presenter. Notes may be used for reference.

Interpretive Reading – Humorous or Serious: Interpretive readings are oral presentations of works taken from any published source. The presenter should be familiar with the piece and it is presented by being read. The presentation begins with a brief introduction with the source, the author, and may also explain the reason for the selection.

Dramatic Presentation: Oral dramatic presentations are based on an original or a published piece performed by combining words and actions to either entertain or educate the audience. This begins with a brief introduction, including the source, the author of the material, and perhaps an explanation of why it was selected.

Commercials: Commercials are presentations to convince an audience to buy an idea or product. Commercials need to include an introduction, a body and a closing statement.

Short Take: Short takes are presentations given from a topic drawn by the participants when they enter the room without advanced preparation. After participants receive their topic, they are given 10 minutes to prepare. Presentations need to be organized to include an introduction, body, and a summary.

Broadcasting: Presenters prepare a radio or television broadcast that may be read from a script. The broadcast may have four to five items of about 30-45 seconds each or a more in-depth story addressing a topic.

Presentation Software: 4-H’ers create and deliver a presentation on how to utilize presentation software. Participants are judged on the presentation, the workmanship and techniques of project graphic design.

Video Production: Youth shoot footage, edit and produce a three-to five-minute video, present their final product to the judges and present information on the production, including when, how and why their video was created.

Web Site Design: Contestants create a website on a topic of their choice and are judged on content, appearance, design, technical performance and the presentation of their website. Participants talk about what they learned, why they decided to use the chosen topic, and show their website.

4-H Promotion: Contestants identify a non-4-H audience and demonstrate a promotional method that communicates the ideas or ideals of the 4-H program. Participants discuss why they chose the delivery method and how they have used or are planning to use the materials.