



Preparing for Judging at the Fair

Parents



✓ Tips for Supporting Your 4-H Member

- Encourage your child to practice talking about their project out loud (not just thinking about answers).
- Focus on confidence, not perfection—it's okay if they don't know everything.
- Help them understand their project process, not just memorize answers.
- Remind them to speak clearly, talk slow, make eye contact, and smile.
- Let youth take ownership—this is their project and learning experience.

💬 Questions Parents Can Ask at Home

- "Can you show me how your project works?"
- "What are you most proud of?"
- "What would you do differently next time?"
- "What was a challenge you had to overcome?"
- "Why did you choose this project?"



★ Helpful Reminders

- Avoid answering for your child—judges want to hear from the youth.
- Encourage a positive mindset: this is a learning experience, not just a competition.

Club Leaders



✓ Tips for Supporting Club Members

- Build in practice time during meetings for mock judging interviews.
- Encourage youth to ask each other questions to build comfort speaking.
- Emphasize life skills like communication, confidence, and reflection.
- Provide constructive, positive feedback after practice sessions.
- Help youth understand what judges are looking for:
 - Knowledge of their project
 - Effort and learning
 - Ability to explain and reflect



Practice Activities

- Pair members and have them interview each other.
- Hold a mock judging day with volunteers as judges.
- Practice introductions and handshakes.

Additional Questions Leaders Can Use

- "What goal did you set at the beginning of the project?"
- "What steps did you take to complete your exhibit?"
- "What would you teach someone else about this project?"
- "How did you improve from last year?"



Project Leaders



Tips for Project-Specific Guidance

- Help youth understand the "why" behind what they did (not just the steps).
- Review project terminology, tools, and techniques relevant to the exhibit.
- Encourage youth to reflect on both successes and mistakes.

Make sure youth can explain:

- Materials used
- Process/steps
- Safety practices (if applicable)

Project-Focused Questions

- "Why did you choose these materials?"
- "How did you decide on your design/approach?"
- "What skills did you develop in this project?"
- "What safety precautions did you use?"
- "How does your project compare to others you've done?"



Skill-Building Ideas

- Demonstrate techniques and then have youth teach it back to you
- Have youth bring projects in-progress, not just finished items
- Practice explaining projects in simple, clear terms

General Tips for Youth



- Speak clearly and take your time
- It's okay to say "I'm not sure" or "I learned that part was challenging"
- Judges are friendly—they want you to succeed!
- Be proud of your work and what you learned - don't worry about the ribbon color, a trophy, or the amount of money on your check.
- Did this project help you think of a goal for next year?
- Have FUN!
- Say thank you to the judge and anyone who helps you!



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Read the Class Requirements Carefully

Make sure you:

- Follow the exact class description (type of food, quantity, presentation, size, etc.)
- Check for any special rules (e.g., no cream fillings, required recipes, etc.)

Bring All Required Materials

This may include:

- Recipe (often required for foods projects)
- 3x5 card (especially if they might be absent)
- Proper container or plate for display
- Any required forms or entry tags



Can't attend Judging?

What if an Exhibitor cannot be present for judging? It is preferred that the exhibitor prepares a 3x5" card that describes the exhibit, what they did and what they learned. Another exhibitor, parent, or leader may sit in for brief judges' comments. There is no automatic penalty for exhibitors who are not present for their judging. It is up to each judge to determine how the exhibitor's absence will affect the placing awarded.

Exhibit: <i>Cherry Pie</i>	What youth did to make his cherry pie
<i>What I Did:</i> <i>I made this cherry pie using fresh cherries that I pitted and cooked into a filling. I practiced making a double crust and worked on sealing and fluting the edges. I also used a lattice top for the first time.</i>	
<i>What I Learned:</i> <i>I learned how to thicken pie filling so it isn't too runny by using cornstarch correctly. I also learned that keeping the butter cold helps make the crust flaky. Next time, I would try to make my lattice strips more even.</i>	what he learned
<i>Next year, I would like to improve my pie crust skills by making more even lattice strips and practicing different types of decorative edges.</i>	he also added a goal for next year to share with the judge

The parent, family member, friend, etc. who brings your entry can request feedback from the judge if they are okay waiting for the feedback as the judges will judge entries for those who are in attendance first.

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