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Introduction

What Is a 4-H presentation?
A presentation is a method of communicating an idea by showing and/or telling. It can be a demonstration that uses posters and other visual aids or an illustrated talk that uses posters and other visual aids.

A 4-H Presentation helps you learn to:
- Research a subject
- Think critically about and analyze a subject
- Organize ideas in a logical order
- Be a teacher and share information
- Practice public speaking skills

21st Century Skills:
Why Public Speaking Is Important
Many companies recruit workers with a variety of 21st century skills that are not reflected in most traditional American schools. There are wide gaps between the skills that businesses value and the skills that most youth actually have. As much as youth need to learn academic content, they also need to know how to keep learning and how to make effective and innovative use of what they know throughout their lives. 21st century learning and thinking skills include:
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Communication skills
- Creativity and innovation skills
- Collaboration skills
- Contextual learning skills
- Information and media literacy skills

In addition, public speaking skills are ranked number one among the skill sets of professionals. Other guiding reasons for developing public speaking skills include:
- Expanding skills for planning, preparation, and performance
- Increasing self-esteem, self-confidence, and ability to accept feedback
- Discovering an important component of leadership development

Storytelling, Presentations, and More
Storytelling is a traditional way of passing knowledge from one individual to another. Young children begin by telling stories to friends, family, at school, and later as part of formal presentations.

As you participate in projects, you reflect on your experiences and collect information and ideas that can be shared with others. This sharing of information is part of the process of learning. Teaching project skills in a presentation takes advanced skills and a deeper understanding of what you have learned.

Giving presentations helps develop several 21st century life skills, including critical thinking, organizing ideas, creativity and innovation, creating and using graphics to support the spoken word, and the ability to speak in front of a group.
Speakers prepare for presentations by giving talks to friends, family, classmates, and their 4-H clubs; practicing skills learned in a project; and observing other people giving presentations.

You can get ideas for presentations from many different sources. The first place to start is with what excites you. What do you enjoy doing? What are your hobbies? Do you like to skateboard, sew, work with your local veterinarian? Whatever it is you enjoy doing and learning about can be turned into a presentation. If you have a hard time coming up with ideas, talk with your family or your 4-H leader. They know what you have learned in your project areas and what you might enjoy presenting.

Every 4-H member is encouraged to give at least one formal presentation each year. Show what you’ve learned; give a presentation.

See Formal Rules for Additional Information.

21st Century Life Skills Model
Section 1: Presentation Best Practices

The A, B, C’s of Presentations

As a speaker you should explore different ways to communicate effectively by using different presentation styles and formats. While each person is most effective when he/she becomes comfortable with his/her unique style, the following materials on presentation mechanics are intended to provide a base of accepted presentation practices with which to start.

Positioning and Body Language

When positioning yourself in the front of a room, stand slightly to your right side of the presentation area. Any posters or other visuals should be on your right side. You can then move closer to the audience for emphasis or closer to your props to emphasize the visuals. Spend most of your time during the presentation halfway between the audience and the visuals. By staying to the left of the audience’s center, you are taking advantage of most people’s visual preference since they read from left to right.

Use your visual aids only as an outline to keep your presentation on track. Remember, your visuals are not the entire presentation. Try to minimize the need for the audience to shift its view repeatedly from you to other parts of the presentation.

Look at the audience 80 to 90 percent of the time, and make eye contact as often as possible. When you avoid visual contact with the audience, you appear unprepared, awkward, and possibly dishonest.

If you have trouble making eye contact (even the best speakers sometimes get nervous), focus your eyes on the back third of the audience because this will keep your head up and help you project your voice.

Keep your shoulders parallel to the ground with no dipping to one side or the other when moving. When resting, hold your shoulders 45 degrees to the audience to convey a non-threatening, casual sense of power. Stand with shoulders square to the group to command the audience’s attention.

Avoid upstaging, which includes turning your back to the audience, hiding your facial expression, or crossing your body with your hands. Stay open and exposed. Keep your hands to your side and in sight (don’t put them in your pockets or cross them behind your back). This position may feel unnatural, but it looks best.

Gesturing should focus toward the audience. The best gestures are hands out and palms
up. If the elbow is bent, the gesture will appear casual. If the elbow is straight, the gesture may appear forceful. Gestures should not detract from your message. They should appear spontaneous and natural and enhance your presentation.

Distribute your weight evenly, with feet shoulder width apart and knees unlocked. If you become tired during the presentation, shift from front to back (put one foot behind) because this type of body movement does not introduce a swaying look to the presenter.

Unlocking the Power of Your Voice

Can you name a few great speakers? Why are they great? One reason is probably because they add power to their presentation with well-planned pauses and changes in volume, tone, inflection, and timing. Start with a hard consonant, so people listen more attentively. Group ideas in threes, and then insert a pause. Avoid vocalized pauses including “um,” “er,” and other verbal fillers that detract from your presentation.

Pitch, tone, and vocal variation can be used to heighten the quality of your presentation. One point to remember is to avoid using the same tone throughout your presentation. It’s important to show the audience that you are excited and knowledgeable about the subject at hand.

Change the volume, speed, and tone of your voice. Project your voice to the audience in the back of the room. Present your points to individuals in the audience, and check for understanding by observing the audience’s facial and physical reactions. These reactions reflect their understanding of your presentation.

Your speaking volume should match your audience and room size. Remember, your voice sounds louder to you than to the rest of the audience. If you speak too quietly, your audience will not understand you, but do not yell at them or they will avoid what you are saying. Try not to talk too fast or too slow. When a person gets nervous, he/she has a tendency to speed up, but try to keep the pace to a normal conversational level.

The Nuts and Bolts of Lettering for Posters and Charts

Words on posters, charts, and PowerPoint templates should be easy to read. People find it easier to read words running from left to right across the page rather than from top to bottom. Always be consistent in style.

The use of UPPERCASE (capitals) should be limited to titles, headings, or where you want to make a point. Also, use uppercase letters for the start of each new item in a list. Any more than seven consecutive words with their letters all capitalized cause the audience to slow their reading and re-read.

Lettering should be bold and easy to read from a distance. Boldness is part line thickness, letter size, and letter style. Demonstration and illustrated talk posters and other visual aids, including overhead
transparencies and PowerPoint slides, should have lettering at least 1 1/2 inches in height. In electronic presentations, the projected height of letters should be comparable in size to poster lettering. Printed poster lettering should use text that is 125 points (1 3/4 inches) high or larger. Use fancy letters for headings where you want to make a point. The eye moves slowly through fancy letters.

Use plain lowercase (small letters) to make charts easier to read. They should also be used for sub-items in a list and for additional information. The eye moves quicker through them with a minimum delay in reading.

Use capital letters, italics, and/or color to provide inflection. Use strong, forceful headlines. Use the text of your poster board illustrations as an outline.

Elaborate from the few words you put on your poster. Use geometric shapes as “bullet” points to guide eye movement toward key points.

Place the geometric shapes at the start of each line in a list of ideas instead of numbering the items.

Choose letters that are easy to read from the back of the room. Avoid using stencils unless you fill in blank areas. Leave at least an inch of margin around a poster’s edge for ease in reading.

Remember the Rule of Three
Keep your presentation understandable by limiting your material to three main ideas. Keep these things in mind:

1. **Visibility**: Is the poster easy to see and read from where participants sit?

2. **Simple**: Is the message easy to understand?

3. **Interest**: Does it attract and hold attention, or is it cluttered with too many words and/or pictures.

4. **Useful**: Are the lettering, words, pictures, etc., suitable for the subject and audience?

5. **Structure**: Are the ideas grouped in sequential order?

6. **Information**: Is it factual, and are the data current?

4-H is a **community** of **young people** across America who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills.
**Color Combinations for Posters and Charts**

Colors can create a desired mood or atmosphere for your message. Visual aids in black and white may do a good job, but color, when used well, can make the presentation better. Use bright, intense colors for the smaller areas and possibly for the center of interest.

Limit colors to two or three so color does not become too obvious to the viewer. Use one dominant color and follow the rule: "The smaller the area, the brighter the color." Cool colors (green, blue, and gray) are best suited for backgrounds, while warm colors (red, yellow, orange) are best for emphasizing the message.

Complementary colors, red on green or yellow on violet, are hard to read. Consider legibility when selecting colors. Although various combinations may harmonize, they may not make your message easy to read. It is best to use dark colors on light backgrounds and light colors on dark backgrounds.

**Color Combinations Listed in Order of Legibility**

1. Black on yellow  
2. Green on white  
3. Red on white  
4. Blue on white  
5. White on blue  
6. Black on white  
7. Yellow on black  
8. White on red  
9. White on green  
10. White on black  
11. Red on yellow  
12. Green on red

**What Color Means in the Background**

**Gray**: neutral, reporting; use for presentation with no emotional sway

**Blue**: calm, conservative, loyal; reduces pulse and blood pressure; use to present unfavorable information

**Green**: analytical, precise, resistant to change; use to encourage interaction and opinion

**Red**: vitality, impulse; promotes an urge to achieve results; raises our spirits; use to motivate

**Yellow**: bright, cheerful, may be too much light

**Violet**: mystic union, humor, charm, delight; but also unimportant and unrealistic; irresponsible and immature

**Brown**: decreased sense of vitality; projects dullness

**Black**: negation of emotions, surrender of power; use to discourage argument
Planning a 4-H Presentation: A Few Easy Steps

Step One
What is the subject matter you wish to present? Select a subject that interests you and that you would like to teach other people.

Step Two
Narrow the subject to a specific topic or process, for instance, identify the local variety of poisonous plants.

Step Three
Who is your intended audience: adults, teens, primary members, experts, novices, etc.?

Step Four
Research your topic. Find the most accurate and recent information on your topic. Consult your project leader, member guides, magazines, books, Web sites, encyclopedias.

Step Five
Why are you giving the presentation? Do you want to inform, teach, motivate to action, stimulate thought, show a process? Write one sentence that tells what you would like your audience to be able to do as a result of watching your presentation.

Suggestion: You may want to set up a self-evaluation test at the end of your presentation. Ask one member of the audience to participate with you in performing the skill. “Let’s see if you can identify poisonous plants with the techniques I have just demonstrated.”

Step Six
Decide your conclusion first. Every piece tells the story. If a part does not fit the story, take it out.

Step Seven
How will you deliver your presentation? Develop an outline of the presentation.

- State your purpose
- Write out your title
- Divide your outline into Introduction, Body, and Conclusion

Introduction:
Use an opening device to create interest in your topic. Then present the main idea, which can be the purpose of your presentation, thesis, or topic sentence. Next, preview the points you intend to cover in the body of your presentation.
**Example:**
Problem: “One of the most common problems people have on hikes in the wilderness is that they are unable to distinguish between poisonous plants and nonpoisonous plants. For example, how often have you heard stories about people who sat down on a patch of poison oak?”

Solution: “Today I am going to show you how to identify three common poisonous plants. As a result of being able to identify these plants, you will be able to avoid them and thus enjoy your visits to the wilderness.”

Body:
Tell them and show them. Tell them the three main points of your talk.

**Example:**
“Three common poisonous plants are:
- Poison oak
- Stinging nettle
- Oleander”

Show the plants as you talk.
- “Three types of poison oak are:”
- “Three characteristics of nettles are:”

Conclusion:
Include a summary of the body’s main points and use a closing device to make your presentation memorable.

**Example:**
“Three common poisonous plants are… “

**Step Eight**

Develop a title that
- Is an attention getter
- Summarizes your purpose
- Is short and to the point (4 to 5 words)

**Examples:**
“Leaf These Plants Alone”
“Look But Don’t Touch”

**Step Nine**
Prepare your materials for the presentation
- Use poster board or other materials to illustrate the main points of your presentation
- Use your outline to serve as the text of your poster board illustrations
- Select models and hand-held objects to be used in the presentation

**Step Ten**
Practice your presentation. How will you set up your work space? How will you handle the materials as you show them? Where will you place them when you put them down?

**Step Eleven**
Try to anticipate questions that may come up, and find answers to those questions.

**Step Twelve**
Practice your presentation again, and again, and again. While practicing, try not to memorize your presentation word for word. Keep your delivery fresh and exciting.
Section 2:  
Competition Specifications

Guidelines for All Presentation Formats

How to Set Up
The speaker is responsible for supplying and setting up all equipment for the presentation. Room hosts may assist during setup and takedown. If you cannot set up the equipment necessary for the presentation without adult assistance, judges may suspect that you did not prepare the visual portion of the presentation.

You may not receive assistance during the presentation. If equipment used in the presentation malfunctions, then you may request an opportunity to restart the presentation once you have had a chance to repair the equipment (you may or may not be allowed to restart your presentation from the beginning depending on the timeframe of the competition). You may be asked to start from where you left off before the malfunction. Parents may assist with equipment malfunctions; however, you should try to fix the problem on your own first. Judges should give the speaker the opportunity to relax, regroup, and compose his/her thoughts before restarting the presentation.

Personal Appearance
4-H does not have an official uniform. Clothing is to be neat, clean, and appropriate for the presentation being given.

You should practice good personal hygiene and be well groomed when giving your presentation. You can improve your appearance by having your shirt tucked in, no holes in your clothing or shoes, no logos or slogans on your clothing, and clean, combed hair.

Handling Questions
In all presentation formats, only the judges may ask questions. Speakers are expected to handle questions related to the presentation. The purpose of questions is to evaluate how the speaker thinks using presentation information. You may opt to make sure that the entire audience hears the question by repeating the question, paraphrasing the question, or including the question in the answer, but this is not a requirement. Repeating gives you a chance to make sure you understand the question. You have given an acceptable response when you admit you are unable to answer the question, but you should provide a resource for finding the answer.

Photography and Filming
The Event Coordinator will set the policy for filming and photography of presentations during the event.

Awards System
4-H competitive presentations are judged using a rubric or scoring tool that utilizes a 1 to 4 point system. The highest score possible on any presentation / public speaking rubric is 28 and the lowest score possible is 7. The rubric lists the criteria for a piece of work, or “what counts” (for example, topic, subject
knowledge, voice, and visual clarity are often what count in a presentation). It also articulates gradations of quality for each criterion, from excellent (4) to poor (1).

**Youth Awards**

Youth who participate in competitive presentation programs at the local, district, and state levels may receive a Gold, Silver or Bronze placing – denoting 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place – or simply a participation ribbon (i.e., if 5 youth make up a presentation category at the district level, a Gold, Silver, and Bronze placing will be announced, and two youth will be awarded participation ribbons only). A Gold award is required for advancing to the next level of competition except in the District Level 11 to 13 and 14 to 18 age divisions. Here Silver Medal winners are allowed to compete at the State Level as District Level Runners-up. District Level Silver winners in the 9 to 10 age division are not eligible to compete unless the Gold Medal winner is unable to attend.

**Age Classification**

Individuals or members of teams (in the presentation program, teams comprise only two individuals) will be judged using the age of the oldest team member. Any team presentation that includes a Primary member may not be judged. All ages are determined as of January 1 of the current 4-H year.

Primary or Cloverbuds (ages 5 to 8) participants may not be judged.

The official 4-H Age Divisions are:

- 5 – 8
- 9-10
- 11-13
- 14-18

**Member Accommodations**

If a speaker has special physical or educational needs that affect the delivery of the presentation, the speaker or leader should note on the presentation application the special needs of the speaker and how the presentation format has been adapted to help the speaker participate in the presentation program.

**Research and Citations**

Speakers may conduct research on a topic through 4-H leaders, parents, teachers, experts, the library, Internet, and many other
sources. Critically review the information you collect. Remember that just because you find information on the Internet, it doesn’t make it credible or reliable. Speakers should always cite the source of the information.

**Presentation Format Descriptions**

**Demonstrations and Illustrated Talks**

A demonstration teaches a skill by the “show how” method. Posters or equivalent visual aids are used to enhance the teaching process. The posters or visual aids include a title, materials, process, and summary.

An illustrated talk teaches a concept or skill that would be impractical or impossible to demonstrate in a classroom setting. Posters or equivalent visual aids should include at least a title, information, and summary. Models or other visual aids can be used to enhance the presentation.

An individual presentation is delivered by one speaker. A team presentation is delivered by two speakers. Team members should divide work and speaking parts equally. An uneven distribution of work or speaking parts will impact the scoring of the “Presentation” skill.

General presentations can range in length from 5 to 12 minutes (note specific category rules). The complexity of the topic and the age of participant should dictate the appropriate length. Certain categories (i.e., outdoor cookery, horse, and public speaking) have established time regulations, and these should be followed (see category rules for details).

Each presentation should have clearly identifiable sections, including an introduction, main body, and conclusion. Speakers are strongly encouraged to relate the presentation to their current 4-H project, 4-H activities, school projects, hobbies, or career interest. If the speaker is questioned concerning the relation of the presentation to a 4-H activity and the presentation is not based on a 4-H activity, the speaker should connect the presentation to his/her interest and tell how he/she got involved in that area.

Judges may ask questions in all presentation formats with the exception of the Public Speaking category. Only “judges” are allowed to ask speakers questions during the official presentation format.

The work areas of the presentation should be used to the speaker’s best advantage. Product labels should be limited to generic names, and product names should be covered. Elevation boards and mirrors may be used by the speaker to enhance the visibility of the work area.

Handing out flyers and samples should not cause a distraction to other presentations. Refer to the Room Host for an appropriate time for the distribution.
Using Note Cards
Speakers may use notes during the presentation. Note cards should be kept to a minimum and used only as a place keeper. Presenters should not rely on or read directly from note cards. Points will be deducted from the skills list if participants rely too much on or read directly from their note cards. Posters should provide any necessary prompting.

Evaluation Rubrics
Evaluation rubrics measure how well a skill is performed and not whether specific rules are satisfied. While an evaluation rubric may appear generic, it measures the core skills that can be shown in each presentation format.

You should use the evaluation rubrics with your parents, leaders, and other adults to develop your presentation skills before entering county, district, or state Presentation Days. The rubrics work equally well for practice and competition. Since the skills being evaluated are the same in practice and competitions, your practices can focus on what’s important to a good presentation.

At the practice, you and your “audience” should each fill out an evaluation rubric after your presentation. Compare the results and work to improve your presentation skills. If you have a video camera available, you can videotape your presentation for review with the completed evaluation rubric. If a video camera is not available, try using a mirror to assist in evaluating your performance.

Practice with these evaluation rubrics because they are the same ones that will be used when you are competing at presentation events. Compare completed evaluation rubrics with evaluation rubrics from previous presentations. Determine how you have improved since your last performance.

A good presentation performs well in all skill categories. Each major skill for the presentation format is listed in the left-hand column of the evaluation rubric. You earn points for each skill based on your performance of that skill. To find the overall quality of the presentation, total the skill
scores. Remember that during competition you will judged against your fellow participants.

Performing very well in a single category does little to raise the overall presentation performance. All presentations can be improved. Just because you think you have done your best, try to do even better. Even Level 4’s have room for improvement.

After you complete each competition, keep practicing to maintain your skills and performance quality. Performing at a high level in one competition does not mean you will automatically perform at the same top level at the next competition.
# 4-H Presentation Evaluation
(Demonstration and Illustrated Talk)

Date: _____________

Member Name: _______________________________________________________

2nd Member Name (if team): ___________________________________________

County: ______________________ Title:

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Total Points __________

Judge’s Name: ______________________ Judge’s Signature: ______________________

Additional Comments:
4-H Public Speaking Evaluation

Date: ______________

Member Name: __________________________________________

Age Division: 
- ___ 9-10
- ___ 11-13
- ___ 14-18

County: ___________________________ Title: __________________________

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<th>Level 4 (4 points)</th>
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<td>Subject Knowledge</td>
<td>Not enough information is present to judge speaker’s</td>
<td>Adequate knowledge of subject is demonstrated.</td>
<td>In-depth knowledge of subject is demonstrated.</td>
<td>Full subject knowledge (more than required) is demonstrated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Coverage</td>
<td>knowledge.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Presentation is unorganized.</td>
<td>Presentation follows a logical progression.</td>
<td>Presentation shows skill and creativity in organization.</td>
<td>Presentation shows a strong structure that enhances the effect of the presentation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Volume, pronunciation, or vocal variation needs</td>
<td>Voice and language are adequate.</td>
<td>Voice and language are skillful and effective.</td>
<td>Volume, tone, timing, inflection, and language enhance presentation.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improvement.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Manner and</td>
<td>Appearance, body language, or gestures need</td>
<td>Appearance and mannerisms are appropriate.</td>
<td>Appearance and mannerisms are presented with</td>
<td>Appearance and mannerisms are presented with a professional demeanor and personal style.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>improvement.</td>
<td></td>
<td>businesslike conduct and style.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening and Closing</td>
<td>Opening or Closing is missing or unclear.</td>
<td>Opening and Closing is clear and organized.</td>
<td>Opening and Closing are well organized and effective.</td>
<td>Opening and Closing are creative and contribute to a unified and cohesive presentation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>More practice is needed to maintain audience interest.</td>
<td>Audience interest is maintained.</td>
<td>Effort is shown to enhance audience interest and</td>
<td>Multiple techniques are used to artfully and successfully create audience interest.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>involvement.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Points __________

Judge’s Name: ___________________________ Judge’s Signature: ___________________________

Additional Comments:
Dee Dee & Cam Harris Talent Showcase

Name of Individual / Talent Group Name: ____________________________________________________________
(Only one form should be completed for each talent act)

County: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Entertainment Act Title: __________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JUDGES’ FEEDBACK</th>
<th>FACTORS FOR CRITIQUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I. Audience Appeal / Entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II. Skill(s) in Area of Talent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>III. Showmanship / Projection / Poise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IV. Staging / Movement on Stage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PIC Signature: ______________________________________
(Person-In-Charge)

Blue Ribbon: YES or NO
References

http://ca4h.org/leadership/spd/presentations.asp

7th ed. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Creating Your Own Rubrics: A basic worksheet of questions to consider when creating a rubric. 
http://www.2learn.ca/search/response3.asp


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Texas. 4-H Youth Development Program, 4-H Public Presentation Guide Method 
Demonstrations and Illustrated Talks. Retrieved January 30, 2007, from 
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Wiggins, G. (1993). Assessing Student Performance: Exploring the Purpose and Limits of 

Prepared by 
Mitzi Downing, Extension Assistant Professor & Specialist 
4-H Youth Development and Family & Consumer Sciences Department

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Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.

2/07-JL                                                                                       4H-10-52-W
E07-45865