
4-H Poster Judging Guidelines



A Handbook for 4-H Volunteers and Judges



Snohomish County 4-H



WASHINGTON STATE
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Introduction

These guidelines have been developed to help individuals judging posters created by 4-H members. We hope you enjoy this experience and are educated, humbled, and filled with pride by the experience; and if you are not already one, you become a believer in youth and their ability to "learn by doing."



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Why 4-H Members Create Posters

There are several reasons for 4-H members to make posters:

The 4-H member increases life skills. By learning how to relay information about their project to the public, 4-H members develop skills in design, composition, color, measuring, drawing, and large format construction. 4-H members increase their ability to think clearly, make decisions, and gain patience with themselves and the process of poster making.

The 4-H member experiences pride of accomplishment, especially when they see the poster displayed.

The 4-H member develops confidence in educating the public through educational and informational posters, often inspiring as well as informing the public.

Let's not forget the incentives a 4-H member receives for learning to create a poster. A 4-H member hopes for ribbons and awards, however, the social approval from an authority figure (judge), the approval gained from supportive statements and encouraging words are also important incentives for youth in their continuing growth and development.



Judges Are Both



A judge holds two roles simultaneously:

Evaluator

- **Focus on the results achieved rather than the method used**
- **Be honest and fair**

Teacher

- **Encourage 4-H member improvement. Exhibiting should be a positive experience for the exhibitor.**
- **Acknowledge effort and offer positive suggestions for improvement.**

A Note About Cloverbuds

Cloverbuds are 4-H members that are 5 - 7 years old. Development of social skills, sharing, and teamwork are important tasks for this age group and because competition is *not* beneficial at this developmental stage, 4-H policy requires that Cloverbuds not participate in contests requiring judging.

Cloverbuds are encouraged to learn about educational displays and to create posters. They are not expected nor are they required to enter posters. Some Cloverbuds do enter posters for exhibit. Judges may be asked to include these posters as a separate group when judging.

Cloverbud posters are to receive a participation ribbon. A blank piece of paper may be used to write words of encouragement and praise to the Cloverbud. These words must not include any evaluation of the work. Use encouragement as an incentive for Cloverbuds to continue creating posters.

Preparing to Judge Posters

Judging 4-H posters is fun. Judging can be educational for you, the judge, too! Judging is rewarding. Your feedback can assist youth in learning life skills. Your words can offer the incentive a 4-H member needs to continue working to improve. **With a few simple guidelines, we hope you will find judging to be among the more rewarding ways you can volunteer your time to help 4-H members "Make Their Best Better!!"**



Make a Self-Assessment

Do I have an ability to relate to youth?
Do I have regard for the worth of each individual?
Can I give high priority to the personal development of each youth?

If you can answer, "yes", you are ready to become a great judge!



Understand Youth Development

Familiarize yourself with what youth in each age division can be reasonably expected to complete. More information in Section 4.



Understand the Danish System

The Danish System of Judging is required for all 4-H Judging. This guide will provide more information in Section 6.

Keep in Mind . . .

- Judges are evaluators that consider each exhibit in relation to the standards of quality. They evaluate on the basis of the results presented, not on the method used.
- Judges are teachers who use the opportunity of judging to help exhibitors improve their competence and they teach in the form of written comments on score cards.
- Judges must be sure to become informed on the rules of the judging event.
- Judges must be sure they understand what is expected of them and accept only the assignment they feel qualified to complete.



Always remember - the youth is more important than the poster!



In addition, judges may want to . . .

- Attend Poster Clinics offered by 4-H
- Learn basic color wheel and graphic design information
- Observe posters and poster-type art in Fair barns, display halls, museums, business displays, movie art, book covers, public educational facilities such as zoos, aquariums, etc.
 - Note the award received (if any). Do you agree?
 - If the poster is pleasing, note what makes it that way.

Expectations of Judges

The following guidelines are appropriate for judges at any judging event.

- Arrive at or before the agreed time; thirty minutes before the time to start judging is appreciated.
- Be well-groomed, rested, and dressed appropriately for the judging.
- Choose to have a professional and pleasant manner.
- Clarify with event management the basis for scoring, placing, and ribbons. Judging in 4-H requires the use of the Danish system.
- Know the time allotted and endeavor to work within the given time.
- Make any suggestions for improvement to event management.
- Do not attempt to make management decisions. For example, interpret rules, disqualify exhibitors, determine age or eligibility.
- Follow the same procedure for judging each exhibit.
- When it is time to judge, take charge of the activity.
- Be professional, but pleasant.
- Be unbiased in all placings.
- Be consistent in judgement and placings.
- Look at every exhibit, giving careful thought before making final decisions.
- Make decisions promptly and firmly and keep the judging moving.
- Complete the entire score card, including placing.
- Give reasons on placing and be as thorough as time permits.
- Write encouraging statements, praise, and constructive suggestions for improvement. Be positive. There is always something kind to be said.
- Do not embarrass or cause embarrassment to exhibitors, volunteers, or event management.
- Sign all required forms.
- Check out with show management before leaving.

Poster Judging Process

Verify Content Accuracy

As a judge, your first step is to verify with event management that the poster subject matter information is correct. Responsibility for subject matter accuracy is with the Superintendent or person responsible for event management.

The content of the poster message should be checked against an established authority resource. Check spelling and accuracy of project information. Sources to use are standard dictionary and 4-H project materials. Ask the 4-H member which source(s) was used.

Gather Materials Needed:

- Clipboard and pen or pencil
- Poster Score Sheets

Be Sure To . . .

- Fill out the necessary information on each score sheet.
- When finished, be sure to sign the score sheet.
- Let 4-H members know you welcome their questions. If you write comments or suggestions, usually members do not approach you, but please make yourself available, if possible.
- Use the score sheet to write comments. See Section 7 for phrases to try.
- Always find several positive things to say about the poster. It works well to say at least two positive comments before making the suggestions for improvement. **There is almost always something to commend.**

Judging with a Partner

You may wish to judge with a partner. It can be more time-consuming at first, but you will soon learn to work together as a team. When judging with a partner, be honest with one another. If you come to an impasse (e.g., you think the poster should receive a Blue Danish and the other judge thinks it should receive a Red Danish), find a third person to break the tie. This rarely happens, but if it does, remember to approach this in good humor.

Poster Judging Process continued

1

Consider Special Allowances

The event manager or Superintendent will inform judges of any posters requiring accommodation. Examples where allowances may be made:

- First year 4-H member (or novice) created poster
- Age / developmental stages implications
- 4-H members with disabilities requiring accommodation

2

Identify Special Awards

Under the direction of the event manager, you will be given the opportunity to make special awards. It may be top poster, merit, creative, or any number of top award per age division. As you judge, set aside those posters you think are deserving of special awards.

3

Assess Overall Impression

Acquaint yourself with the poster. Look at it from the eye of the public. Get a general impression of the poster from the categories on the score sheet. Evaluate your overall reaction to the poster as it relates to the guidelines. Does the poster attract you? Does it make you stop, read, remember?

4

Scoring

Begin anywhere on the poster and in any category of the score sheet that works for you. Write scores in each box as you work your way through the score sheet. If you change a score, be sure to erase well so the original mark is not visible.

Refer to the Danish system as you judge. Remember that *excellent* does not indicate perfection, but is a broad grouping indicating a degree of excellence. *Good* ranks well in relation to the standard, leaving room for improvement. *Fair* indicates average or moderately satisfactory for the standard, leaving much room for improvement.

5

Sign and Submit

When you have completed all judging, give the score sheets to the event manager or attach to the back of the poster (per event manager instructions.) Be sure to sign each score sheet.

Age Group Characteristics

When judging, keep in mind the talent and ability of the age group, yet challenge them to express their best. Give good reasons for your judgements. Helping youth understand reasons is a way for them to continue developing personal decision making and responsibility.

8 to 12 Years Old

- self-centered and easy to influence
- want to learn skills; can take little criticism
- have a very short interest span, unless very interested
- curious - will ask many questions
- girls mature 12-18 months ahead of boys
- need simple, short directions
- are confused by too many choices
- very conscious of personal appearance
- want adult approval; must show everything they do
- like to measure skill with others
- are most comfortable in same-sex groups
- like group organization
- ability to cooperate is increasing

Considerations for Judging

- vary comments and pace of activities; short
- provide a sense of belonging with your actions
- make them feel included in the decisions
- provide reassurance for their physical appearance and willingness to participate
- expect some lack of completion as a natural part of the age group
- avoid teasing
- praise good work and give correction or direction in a positive manner
- present a positive attitude, setting a good example

12 to 14 Years Old

- have a longer interest span
- ability to produce more in-depth projects
- wider range of abilities, experience, and vocabulary
- better at planning than executing
- think they know it all; will often reject help
- interested in appearance only on special occasions
- want adult guidance but reject being dominated and resent criticism
- use friendships are a proving ground to gain independence from adults

Considerations for Judging

- try to pay attention to special skills
- help them identify and recognize their good points
- give praise and recognition for progress
- don't nag, talk down, condemn; rather, show a sense of humor and warmth
- have few set rules but be firm with them - they will cooperate when they know the expectation
- maintain a strong, kind atmosphere
- have interest in hero worship
- offer reassuring informal chats that inspire self-confidence and put them at ease

14 - 19 Years Old

- becoming better judges of their abilities
- have interest span similar to adults
- need training, encouragement, and experience on an adult level
- have an increasing ability to see how things relate and use that in solving problems
- select and master skills that hold their interest
- have limited experiences, but personal motivation is high
- have a great need to make their own choices
- have exaggerated interest in personal appearance to meet their group's standards
- need and want guidance but seldom ask
- accept guidance readily from a prestigious adult
- going along with the gang is less noticeable but need acceptance in mixed groups

Considerations for Judging

- accept each person for who they are
- judge the project, not the person
- don't expect them to tell you much
- devise creative ways to ask questions/talk with them
- they prefer sharing within their own groups
- trust them
- tolerate some conduct as part of their development
- help them understand rules / taking responsibility for their actions
- provide information about social graces
- observe things in projects which require more patience and perseverance as this is a developing life skill
- praise independent thinking and decision making
- help them evaluate their project as you judge
- pay attention to evidence of helping others
- encourage development of leadership

The Danish System

The Danish System of Judging is also known as the group method. It was developed to meet the needs of youth and the objectives of the 4-H program. It is used exclusively in the Washington State 4-H Program and is the dominant method used throughout the 4-H program in the United States.

Judging in the 4-H program is done according to quality standards. It is not a matter of personal taste or whim. The standard must be set before judging takes place. The standards can be high, but must be attainable.

The standard for Poster Judging is demonstrated on the score sheet.

The Danish System evaluates entries or exhibits in a particular class or contest according to the standards developed for that class or contest. The entries, exhibit or performance of contestants are evaluated and arranged into groups for recognition of their achievement. Special emphasis in exhibiting is placed on the use to which articles are to be put.

Items or exhibits within each class are carefully examined in relation to the standards established and in comparison with their relative merit when compared to each of the other entries or exhibits in the same class or contest. After evaluation of each item in the class, the entire class may be sub-divided into four groups according to their own merit. If the performance of 4-H members is being evaluated, they may be divided into these four groups in relation to their level of performance with due consideration of their age and experience.

Danishes can be awarded as flat ribbons, stickers, cards, verbal designation, or by whatever method the event chooses. Danishes are commonly awarded alongside a placing (ribbon or other style of award).

The Danish System continued



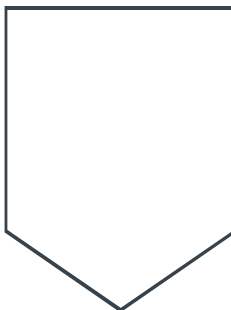
Blue = Excellent

Entries or performances who most nearly meet the standards established for the particular class or level of performance. Excellent does not indicate perfection, but is a broad grouping indicating a degree of excellence.



Red = Good

This grouping indicates exhibits or performances that rank well in relation to the standards or expected achievement of the class or contest. Either the general level of the accomplishment is less than excellent, or enough room for improvement is found, to cause the placing to drop from excellent to good.



White = Fair

Exhibits or performances that rate average or moderately satisfactory for the standards established and generally demonstrate significant room for improvement.



No Award | Participation Award

Performances or exhibits which, for one reason or another, fail to produce that level of achievement which can be reasonably expected in relation to the specific class or performance in which they are entered.

Providing Feedback

Providing feedback is a teaching-learning experience which is essential in recognizing young people for their efforts to achieve up to a standard of excellence. The judge is a key person in making this recognition an effective teaching tool. Judges need to know and accept the standards being used. It is also important for judges to know how to communicate with young people.

Appropriate feedback is an encouragement to 4-H members to continue to improve their skills.

The Sandwich Method

Positive comments from judges and other adults is one way of encouraging youth to continue striving for improvement. A method of giving feedback proven to be successful is the **sandwich method**.

Begin with two positives.

For example:

- The poster paints you chose are nice, even colors.
- The lettering on your poster is very easy to read.

Suggest one way to improve.

For example:

- The overall impression of your poster seems cluttered. Do you think having fewer pictures would help?

Add another positive.

For example:

- The pictures you have chosen are attractive.

End by identifying the youth's capabilities.

For example:

- It is easy to see that you care about your work a great deal.



Providing Feedback continued

Praise vs Encouragement

Praise is often emphasized as the way to build a person's self-confidence. This is not always true. Although praise does build self-confidence in some people, it can cause dependency and self-doubt in others. Overly praising youth can lead to a disbelief in praise as a valid judgement.

Encouragement, on the other hand, has positive, long- and short-term outcomes. When giving encouragement, we separate who the person is from what they do. Encouragement is a valuable way to help youth enjoy the project and want to do more. Judges have the opportunity to describe a strength so that the youth can identify their own strengths.

Providing encouragement is important for youth of all ages.

Positive Feedback Examples



"I" Statement Examples:

- I like this organization.
- I like the planning in your work.
- I appreciate your careful work.
- I noticed every point was covered.
- I think fairgoers would like this.
- I think the colors show a good eye.
- What creativity! I enjoyed it.
- I woke up with those colors!
- I think making a poster can be challenging and you did it!
- I really enjoyed this poster.
- Wow! I really got the message clearly.

Providing Feedback continued

Try using questions to encourage improvement.

- Could you have organized better?
- Would planning earlier help?
- Would a rough draft make a better final?
- Would making a list first improve it?
- Do you think fairgoers would like this?
- Do you think more color would be better?
- Can you find more sources next time?
- Could a change in color make it easier to read?

Sometimes it is difficult to phrase suggestions as a question.

Here are some positive suggestion statements:

- If you used less red, it would improve the effect.
 - Neat lettering would be easier to read.
 - One idea on your poster would help me understand ...
 - Spacing the letters apart would help me read.
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**The mission of 4-H
is to empower youth
to reach their full
potential, working
and learning in
partnership with
caring adults.**



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