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UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

4H339

4-H VOLUNTEER TRAINING SERIES

Planning a Successful Field Trip



Field trips can be great experiences for youth to learn project content and life skills. Field trips also contribute to the experiential learning philosophy of 4-H. This document includes some suggestions to make a field trip fun, safe, and educational.

Develop a Plan for 4-H Project Learning Activities

Instead of deciding what to do at the last minute, try to plan ahead. This will make it more fun for the youth and less stressful for you. Involve them in planning and doing. As you plan for project activities such as field trips, consider the following:

- What will be learned?
- What teaching methods will be used?
- What opportunities for hands-on experiences will be included?
- How can the field trip be used to introduce a project or to culminate a project?
- How can it be made more special and fun?

Identify a Variety of Potential Field Trips

Look for places that

- match needs of youth projects,
- are relevant and interesting to youth (give them choices when possible),
- are affordable, and
- are close by.

Some Field Trip Ideas

Consider these places and activities:

- Environmental and nature centers
- Bird sanctuaries and wildlife refuges
- Historical sites
- Natural attractions, including state and national parks
- Hiking, biking, walking, canoeing
- Farms, orchards, greenhouses, nurseries
- Factories and corporations
- Government offices and agencies
- University offices, laboratories, and research stations
- Hospitals and veterinary clinics
- Airports, train stations, bus terminals
- Museums
- Cultural festivals
- Supermarkets and other retail stores

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- Zoos, hatcheries, aquariums
- Radio and television stations, newspapers
- Police and fire stations
- Restaurants and bakeries

Make Contact with the Site

- Call in advance.
- Make reservations if needed.
- Find out if there are fees. Ask for group rate discounts, and check methods of payment.
- Visit the site in advance, if possible.
- Check to see if the site is accessible for people with disabilities.

Arrange Transportation

- Buses, vans, or cars? Family-owned or rental? Make sure drivers have valid licenses and laws and policies are obeyed. Consider using public transit, if available.
- How much time will trip take?
- Have maps and directions available for all drivers.
- Share costs of fuel and tolls.
- Getting there can be half the fun. Consider side trips, or singing and playing games along the way.

Don't Forget the Essentials

- Food (e.g., bag lunches, buy from restaurant)
- Lodging, if overnight
- Name tags help the group to know each other and the public to identify participants who may wander astray.
- Where are the bathrooms when you get there? Will stops be needed along the way? As a group leader, you may want to bring along a couple of rolls of toilet paper just in case.
- What is appropriate clothing for participants to wear? (For example, the type of shoes to wear or not to wear.)
- Money for food, entrance fees, souvenirs, and other trip-related costs
- Cameras, camcorders

Recruit Adequate Adult Supervision

- Have at least one adult for every 10 youths (this depends on the age of the young people and the activity you are doing). Get more adults for young children or for potentially hazardous activities. At least two adults are preferred.
- Explain roles and responsibilities to adults. Make sure all are working from the same rules and expectations. Adults are there to have fun also, but their main job is to serve as a chaperone.



Obtain Copies of Health Forms for Youth and Adults

Health Forms for youth and adult participants should be carried by the leader on a field trip. Copies of Health Forms can be obtained from your county 4-H Office. Health Forms will provide you with important health and medical information that might be needed during an emergency situation. It is a good practice to review each participant's Health Form before the trip, in order to be aware of any special needs of individuals.

Chaperones

All chaperones must complete the Youth Protection Training and be appropriately screened. Refer to the Florida 4-H website (http://florida4h.org/policies/#chap) for more information about chaperone screening and training requirements.

Prepare 4-H'ers for Trip

- Explain where they are going and what they will do or see.
- Agree on rules of behavior and safety.

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- Encourage them to devise questions to ask when they get there.
- Identify some of the things to look for.

Focus on Safety

- Contact your 4-H office about securing accident insurance coverage for participants.
- Bring first aid kits. Try to bring along adults with first aid or CPR training.
- Keep kids together. Do periodic head counts.
- Break into smaller, more manageable groups. Have check-in times if the group splits up.
- Assign "buddies" (pairs of youth who will look out for each other).

Capture the Experience and Memories

- Photos/video
- Scrapbook(s)
- Participant diaries

Evaluate the Experience and Share Reactions of Participants

- What did participants learn? How did the experience relate to the 4-H project or real life?
- What did participants dislike? Why?
- What could be improved?

Refer to Learn by Doing and A Little Bit More for tips on using the Do-Reflect-Apply experiential learning process.

Say "Thank You!"

This leaves a positive, lasting impression of 4-H and its members.

- Have kids decide how they want to thank people (e.g., handwritten notes, big cards with group signatures, send souvenirs/mementos, or postcards).
- Write thank-you notes/letters to all who helped (e.g., parents, chaperones, and tour guides).

Share What Was Learned with Others

- Send a 4-H Club report to your county 4-H Office. Many counties print such highlights in the county 4-H newsletter.
- Give public presentations to other clubs and to the public (such as to local service organizations).
- Create an exhibit to display in public places and at the County 4-H Fair.
- Inform the media by writing a news release or calling them in advance. (Consider inviting a reporter from local media along with you.)

Don't Have Time or Money to Go on a Field Trip? Bring the Field Trip to You!

When you can't go to the "field," bring the "field" to you. This can be done by video, guest speaker, demonstration, games, or simulations. Let kids use their imagination and natural curiosity. Be creative and nothing is an obstacle to fun learning.

