

2026 Central Sandhills 4-H Communications & Expressive Arts Contest

Rules and Guidelines

Awards will be presented after the Contest.

The Communications & Expressive Arts (CEA) Contest will include:

- **Prepared Speeches**
- **Illustrated Presentations**
 - *There is a non-4-H class option for Prepared Speeches and Illustrated Presentations for youth ages 10-18*
- **Impromptu Speeches**
- **Radio public service announcements (PSAs)** *The radio PSAs are judged prior to the contest and will be played during the contest. Results are announced with the other CEA awards.*
- **Video Communication Entries** *Video communication entries are judged prior to the contest and will be played during the contest. Results are announced with the other CEA awards.*
- **Music/Talent**

ALL entries are due to the Extension Office by **the friday before the contest at 3:00pm.** Entries can be sent in via email (bemerson4@unl.edu).

PSA and video communication entries can be emailed in or put onto a thumb drive and dropped off at the office. The entry form is available on our website centralsandhills.unl.edu or in the Extension Office.

What to Wear to the CEA Contest: Dress appropriately for the contest. Church-type clothing is recommended, but *nice* jeans may be more appropriate for certain topics. **DO NOT** wear costumes or special effect clothing. 4-H Emblem, t-shirt, or pin not required for this contest.

Questions? Contact Brittney Walker, 4-H Assistant, at 308-645-2267 or bemerson4@unl.edu.

SPEAKING COMPETITIONS

General Information:

Age divisions for SPEAKING EVENTS are based on the State Competition. Ages are as of January 1, 2026. *Please note that Clover Kids and Juniors are not eligible for all classes, please read carefully.*

- Clover Kid 5-7
- Junior 8-10
- Intermediate 11-13
- Senior 14-18

Resources are available at <https://4h.unl.edu/premier-communication-event-contests>

Eligibility for State Premier Communication Event June 19th & 20th, 2025 in Lincoln.

- Youth must be currently enrolled in 4-H to participate.
- Additional eligibility requirements include:
 - Prepared Speech, Radio Public Service Announcement (PSA), and Illustrated Presentation contest classes:
 - Youth must receive a purple ribbon at their County Contest and be selected to participate in the Premier Communication Event in these classes.
 - Counties may select up to five (5) contestants in each age division.
 - Impromptu Speech and Video Communication:
 - Open to all youth enrolled in 4-H.
- If eligible, youth may participate in all contest classes.
- Pre-registration is required for all participants and is completed by Nebraska County Extension Offices.

Rules and Guidelines for 4-H Illustrated Presentations Contest:

An Illustrated Presentation is a live presentation with a formal talk where youth will use visual aids (such as props, posters, computer-based visuals, handouts, video, etc.) to show and tell others how to do something. The judge views the entire presentation and engages in a question-and-answer session following the presentation.

Rules

- Length
 - Clover Kids: no time guideline
 - Individual - Junior Division: 3-5 minutes
 - Individual - Intermediate and Senior Divisions: 6-8 minutes
 - Team - Junior Division: 5-7 minutes
 - Team - Intermediate and Senior Divisions: 8-10 minutes
 - Participants will be penalized if their presentation exceeds the time limit
- An Illustrated Presentation may be given by one (1) individual or a team of two (2) individuals. If team members are not in the same age division, they must compete in the age division of the oldest team member.
- All presentation topics should be related to what the 4-H youth is learning through 4-H educational experiences.
- Presentations should include an introduction (the "why" portion of the topic), a body (the "show and tell" portion of the topic), and a conclusion/summary (the "what" portion of the topic).
- Equipment provided includes two (2) tables, one (1) easel, PC compatible computer (including Microsoft PowerPoint) with a WiFi internet connection, and a projector or television screen.
- Presenters using computer-based visuals may bring files on a USB drive that is PC formatted.
- Presenters are expected to clean up the area in which they work.

Rules and Guidelines for Prepared 4-H Speech:

The Prepared Speech contest provides youth the opportunity to write and prepare a speech on a topic related to their 4-H experience. The judge will view the speech and evaluate based on the subject, organization, and delivery of the speech.

Rules

- Length/Source:
 - Clover Kid (ages 5-7): no time guideline (may use a reading, poem, or original speech)
 - Junior Division (ages 8-10): 2-3 minutes
 - Intermediate Division (ages 11-13): 3-5 minutes
 - Senior Division (ages 14-18): 5-8 minutes
 - For Senior Division only, judges will deduct three points from the score for every 30 seconds under or over the time limit. Only individuals may compete in this class; no team entries are allowed.
- All speeches must be original and include 4-H as the major component of the speech.
- 4-H public speakers may not use the old speech written by a sibling, another 4-H member, or anyone else.
- Acknowledge the source of information used in the speech. For example, an article from a magazine may be used for reference but should not be quoted directly unless you tell the audience your source. Clover Kids should credit sources if not using an original speech.
- The use of visual aids and props is not allowed.

LOCAL LEVEL ONLY – There will be a class for **non-4-H related prepared speeches and illustrated presentations** for youth **ages 10-18**. There will be just one award given for “Champion General Public Speaking”. Youth must still enroll in 4-H to participate in the competition. Youth may use speeches created for school-based competitions in this category. There will not be time limits, but a minimum of 3 minutes and maximum of 10 minutes is the recommended range. All non-4-H-related guidelines above apply, and all entries should be original.

Rules and Guidelines for Impromptu Speeches:

The Impromptu Speech competition gives youth the opportunity to write and present a speech around a 4-H related topic that they select during the competition where they are given 15 minutes to develop and prepare for their presentation. Judges are evaluating the subject, organization, and delivery of the speech.

Rules

- Length
 - Junior Division (ages 8-10): 1 1/2 minutes
 - Intermediate Division (ages 11-13): 3 minutes
 - Senior Division (ages 14-18): 5 minutes
 - Only individuals may compete in this class; no team entries are allowed.
- On the day of the contest, participants will have a topic randomly selected for them. Youth will have no more than 15 minutes to develop a speech on the selected topic. Participants will then deliver the speech to judges and audience members.
 - Example topic: My Day in 4-H

Rules and Guidelines for Video Communication:

The video communication contest allows youth to create a multi-media video around a theme related to 4-H. Judges will be evaluating both the organization of information as well as the audio and video production.

Rules

- Length: 60-90 seconds for Junior, Intermediate, and Senior Divisions
- Only individuals may compete in this class; no team entries are allowed.
- Youth may use a phone, laptop, or tablet to create a multi-media piece around the theme: **"Ready through 4-H... and beyond."**
- Sound effects, public-domain music, and graphics can be used. Copyrighted materials may not be used.
- Videos will be submitted electronically as MP4 files along with the registration form. Entries will be judged prior to the competition and results will be announced at the competition.

Rules and Guidelines for Public Service Announcements (PSAs):

The Radio Public Service Announcement (PSA) contest challenges youth to write and record a 60-second promotional audio recording focused on a yearly theme that could be played on the radio to promote the work of Nebraska 4-H. Youth are judged on their overall organization and delivery of the PSA.

Rules

- Length:
 - Clover Kids (ages 5-7): 30-60 seconds
 - All other age divisions: 60 seconds
- Only individuals may compete in this class; no team entries are allowed.
- Youth will prepare a PSA around the theme: **Ready through 4-H... and beyond.**
- All radio PSA's must promote 4-H and be general enough to be used anywhere in Nebraska at any time of the year.
- All 4-H PSA's must include the following tagline within the last 10 seconds of the PSA: "Learn more about the Nebraska Extension 4-H Youth Development Program at 4h.unl.edu." The tagline is included in the 60-second time limit.
- Sound effects and public-domain music may be used. Copyrighted material may not be used.
- All PSA's must be the original work of the presenter. Contestants may not use PSA's written and provided by the state or national staff.
- PSA entries will be submitted electronically in a .wav or .mp3 audio format along with the registration form. Entries will be judged prior to the competition and results will be announced at the competition.

Music and Talent Competition

General Information:

- This competition is local only, there are no state-level competition options. **THEREFORE, WE FOLLOW LOCAL AGE CATEGORIES, WHICH DIFFER FROM THE SPEAKING AGE CATEGORIES.**
- Duets with contestants in different age categories are judged in the older level category. There is only one division for group entries.
- All contestants must give the original sheet music (no copies) to the judges at the contest. NEW – there will be NO deductions to Senior performers using sheet music.
- There will not be a separate category for original compositions, but original work will be taken into consideration by the judge.

Division	4-H Age as of Jan 1	Time Guideline	Special Guidelines
Vocal Solo Duet	Clover Kid (ages 5-7) Junior (ages 8-10) Intermediate (ages 11-13) Senior (ages 14-18)	No limit on the number of songs within six minutes.	-Live or recorded instrumental background music may be used.
Self- Accompanied Vocal Solo Duet	Clover Kid (ages 5-7) Junior (ages 8-10) Intermediate (ages 11-13) Senior (ages 14-18)	No limit on the number of songs within six minutes.	-Performers singing while also playing the accompanist must (ex: sings while playing the piano or guitar). The duet is two vocalists each playing separate instruments.
Piano Solo Duet	Clover Kid (ages 5-7) Junior (ages 8-10) Intermediate (ages 11-13) Senior (ages 14-18)	No limit on the number of songs within six minutes.	-None
Instrumental Solo Duet	Clover Kid (ages 5-7) Junior (ages 8-10) Intermediate (ages 11-13) Senior (ages 14-18)	No limit on the number of songs within six minutes.	-Live or recorded instrumental background music may be used.
Talent Solo Duet	Clover Kid (ages 5-7) Junior (ages 8-10) Intermediate (ages 11-13) Senior (ages 14-18)	No limit on the number of songs within six minutes.	-Singing with a recorded voice is considered "talent." -May also be lip sync, dance, twirling, etc.
Group Entry		No limit on the number of songs within six minutes. Skits should be 2-6 minutes in length.	-3 or more participants -Can be vocal, instrumental, dance, etc. -Any combination of ages.