



Reporter's Handbook



_____ Year

_____ County

- Contents:**
- Welcome to you new job
 - Inside Tips for Reporters
 - Other ways you can use your reporting skills
 - Hints for writing right
 - What Should You Write About?
 - Here's One Way to Write a News Article
 - A News Article from Start to Finish
 - Now It's Your Turn

Club Name _____

Organizational Leader _____

President _____

Vice President _____

Secretary _____

Treasurer _____

News Reporter _____



Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension educational programs abide with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Welcome to you new job

You and the other officers and members of your 4-H club are getting ready for an exciting year. There will be new projects and activities, trips and events. People in your club may do service projects, win awards, and accomplish many goals.

As club reporter, it's your responsibility to let others know what the members of your club are doing. You'll be preparing articles to give to local newspapers and radio stations. The stories you write will keep your community updated about the important things your 4-H club is doing.

Your job is important for your whole club. Being an officer is a big responsibility, but with a little practice, you'll do a great job! This booklet contains lots of information on how to do your job well.

Inside Tips for Reporters

Check the Deadlines

Check the deadlines at the newspaper and radio station. Always get your story in on time. News that misses the deadline probably will not get into the paper or on the radio. Worse than that, it makes you look unprofessional.

Know What They Want

Try to find out if your paper or radio station prefers to have stories about what is **going** to happen or what has **already** happened. Many prefer one or the other.

Correspondents

Some weekly newspapers have correspondents in each community they cover. If you live in a community with a correspondent, contact that person to help you get stories in the paper.

Meet the Editor

If possible, meet the news editor at the paper or the news director at the radio station. Call ahead for an appointment. After introducing

yourself, briefly tell the person about your club and your plans for the year. Ask how and when they would like to get stories from you, and what kinds of stories they are most interested in publishing. Be sure to thank them for their time.

Send Photos

Newspapers like to have photos. Maybe someone in a photography project can help you get good photographs of your activities. Sometimes a photo and a short caption explaining the picture is the very best kind of story. If you are planning an activity like a community service project, perhaps someone from the paper will come to photograph your group in action.

While you're serving as your club's reporter, think about job skills that you might be learning. Do you think you would like to work as a reporter, gathering news and writing feature stories? Would you enjoy being an editor, and planning the newspaper?

Other Ways You Can Use Your Reporting Skills

Beside reporting the news for your 4-H club, you may be able to use your writing skills in other ways. Some community newspapers produce a special 4-H edition to which you might contribute. Maybe you can work on gathering news at a fair or another special event. Your school newspaper may be able to use your skills, too.

Maybe you'll enjoy reporting so much that you'll consider a career in print journalism. Newspapers, newsletters and magazines all need editors, reporters and photojournalists. People who work at your community's newspaper, your school counselor and the library are all resources from which you can find out more about a career in journalism.

Hints for Writing Right

- Use simple language. Short words are usually better than long ones.
- Write brief sentences. Include only details necessary to the story.
- Keep your paragraphs short. Two or three sentences about one idea is usually enough for a paragraph.
- Start sentences with the people who are doing the action. Say, “Jessie won the award,” and not, “The award was won by Jessie.”
- Be accurate. If you can’t remember or aren’t quite sure, ask. If you don’t know how to spell it, look it up.
- Use people’s first and last names, and spell them correctly. Generally, people like to see their names in print, but they might get irritated if their names are misspelled.
- The first paragraph of the article, or lead, is the most important one. It tells the most important part of the article in one or two sentences.
- A news story tells who, what, where, when, why, and how. Decide which of these is the most important point and start the first sentence with that point.

What Should You Write About?

People want to find out new, interesting, unusual, and important information. As you decide what to write about, ask yourself what would be some of the most interesting things about your 4-H club to someone who knew nothing about 4-H, your club, or the people who are in your club.

Is your club making an important contribution to your community? Did you plan and carry out hazardous waste pick-up day? Did you help arrange a work on a dinner dance for residents of a care facility?

Is there something else unique about your club? Is it the oldest club in your county? Is your club celebrating its 50th anniversary?

Are you working to raise money for a special trip or educational event? Are you planning a dog-obedience program?

All of these would make good stories. With some practice you’ll be able to find an interesting “angle” on almost any event, project or trip.

When you write about a meeting or an activity, always write about the action taken, such as, “4-H’ers decided,” “4-H’ers learned,” “4-H’ers elected.” This will capture more of your readers’ attention than by simply saying that you met.

Write down any story ideas you may have about your club for this year. These ideas don’t have to be for stories you would write immediately. Review and add to your list after club meetings.

A News Article from Start to Finish

Here is an example of the steps one reporter took to write an article about his club's service project.

The notes he took:

painted picnic tables May 17 and 24 at Mayfield Town Park

used profit, \$134.73, from chili supper in February

picnic table project decided on after talking to mayor in March to find out what Mayfield needed. Found out what the 4-H'ers could do.

Club decided in April to paint tables.

used dark green paint

hardware store donated some supplies

all 7 picnic tables

brushed, scrapped, scrubbed, rinsed tables

work days organized by Lenny Washington and Jana McDowell

painters: Joe Wang, Jennifer Berkowicz Dana Molacek, Karl Holz, Alissa Martin, Laurie Gustafson

*4-H leaders: Marvin Ramirez and Eileen Scott
Next Meeting June 2, 8 a.m., Mayfield Town Park. Breakfast Program: report on service project. Mayor and city council, special guests.*

Take these notes and create a WWWWWH page.

This reporter followed these steps:

1. From his notes he filled in each box on WWWWWH page.
2. If more details were available, he added them.
3. He marked the most important box with a 1, the second most important with a 2 and so on. In this case "who" was marked 1, and what was marked 2.

4. Then he wrote his first sentence, to include who and what.
5. The rest of the sentences give more information about what the club did.

Here is the completed news article. This is how it looked when the reporter took it to the newspaper and the radio station:

For immediate release:

The Mayfield True Blue 4-H'ers painted picnic tables at the Mayfield Town Park as a community service project on May 17 and 24. They bought paint and supplies with money they earned during the year.

Organizers of the community service project were Lenny Washington and Jana McDowell. Club members who participated were Joe Wang, Jennifer Berkowicz, Dana Molacek, Karl Holz, Alissa Martin and Laurie Gustafson. The club's volunteer 4-H leaders are Marvin Ramirez and Eileen Scott.

The 4-H'ers swept dirt from the tables, scraped paint and scrubbed and rinsed the tables. Then they painted all seven tables dark green.

The organizers of the community service project talked to the Mayor of Mayfield to find out what needed to be done in Mayfield that 4-H'ers could do. The Mayor gave club members a number of good ideas, and at the April 4 meeting 4-H'ers voted to paint the tables and began planning for the project.

The Mayfield True Blue 4-H Club will hold their June 2 meeting in the Mayfield Town Park. It will be an 8:00 a.m. breakfast meeting. The Mayor and city council members will be special guests of the club, and the program will be a special report on the service project.

For more information, contact:
Mayfield True Blue 4-H Club
Michael Madigan, reporter
416 Elmwood
Mayfield, NE
381-6902

Now It's Your Turn...

Here are some notes about a 4-H event. Use them to write a practice news article.

Mayfield True Blue 4-H Club working on Folk Art project

found quilters, basket-makers and fiddlers

doing community inventory of folk artists in Mayfield

will visit quilter, Margaret Martin next week

visited by basket-maker, Jerry Morgan, June 3 met at Laurie Gustafson's home

Jerry Morgan brought needs to make baskets which needed to be soaked in water so they will bend without breaking

Jerry told about how he learned to make baskets from his grandmother

Margaret Martin the quilter is Alissa Martin's grandmother

club members asked Jerry questions about his basket-making

questions had been planned in advance to get the most attention

Folk Art project helps people learn about the folk arts in their communities and families

Folk Art Fair exhibit is scheduled at the Mayfield State Bank over the 4th of July weekend

Jerry completed a basket in about 30 minutes

Lenny Washington, Jana McDowell, Joe Wang, Jennifer Berkowicz, Dana Molacek, Karl Holz, Alissa Martin and Laurie Gustafson were at the meeting with Jerry

Marvin Ramirez and Eileen Scott are club leaders

Use a WWWWWH page provided to group your information into categories. Add details, and decide what facts are most important.

Write your news story. Start by constructing your first sentence from the most important information and then add the details you want your readers to know.

Who

What

Why

Where

When

How