

4-H Story

The purpose of the 4-H Story is to allow members to complement the facts and figures reported in the Oklahoma Report Form with the personal growth and practice change aspects of project work that sometimes are hard to report. The story should not be a reiteration of the Oklahoma Report Form, but instead should give the reader a sense of who the member is and why 4-H and this project in particular have made a difference.

While the story is not a creative writing project, it does need to convey more than facts and figures. This is the place to share the personal growth experiences, special projects, etc. The story should be conversational - the reader should feel as if he/she is listening to the writer or having a conversation with him/her. The reader should feel your disappointments and share your triumphs through your words. The most successful 4-H projects are still those in which what is learned is more important than what was won. If involvement in a particular 4-H project has resulted in a change in the individual, the family, or even the farming operation - these are the important concepts and ideas to share in a story.

Use Action Verbs to describe Leadership

If you taught a class or workshop, use:

- Tutored
- Informed
- Conducted
- Instructed
- Directed

If you started something new or took an active leadership role, use:

- Introduced
- Developed
- Designed
- Organized
- Enlisted
- Planned
- Initiated
- Prepared

Use Descriptive terms to convey feelings or emphasize points

If you liked something, use:

- Appreciate
- Enjoy
- Admire
- Regard
- Prize

If you were part of a group or help an adult or older member, instead of assisted, use:

- Supervised
- Distributed
- Guided
- Managed
- Arranged

The examples which follow use different writing styles and convey different messages. They are neither good nor bad examples, but a way to see different ways of conveying the same information.

Sheep

In 1999 I joined 4-H and bought two show lambs. I showed those lambs at the county fair and the spring livestock show. One placed first and the other sifted. I spent a lot of time exercising the lambs and tried several different feeds before we found one the sheep liked. The next year, I bought two ewe and a wether and we had a pretty good show season. We had the ewe bred and she had twin lambs. One died. I showed the other one the following year, but it did not do very well. My dad decided that if I was going to make the sale, we had to buy better sheep. We asked our neighbor for some help in buying better ewes so that I could raise better sheep. I made the sale with a wether from the next crop of lambs and this year I had the breed champion. Now I have 20 ewes and a little money in the bank

Food Science

I joined 4-H in the 4th Grade because everyone else was. One of the first events was the County fair. I made cookies and got 2nd. I should have gotten 1st, but the agent's kid is my age, so I guess I'll never win. The next event was the food fair. I really went all out and made 10 entries. I even made a German Chocolate Cake! I won 3 blue ribbons, 2 red ribbons, 3 white ribbons and 2 green ribbons, but I didn't win Grand Champion. I did a speech on the Food Pyramid thing and I didn't win that either.

My second year of 4-H went better. I won first place on my jelly at the county fair and got to send it to the state fair and it placed 8th. I was disappointed, but my mom said getting any ribbon at the state fair is a big deal. Fall came and I had my eye on one of those Grand Champion silver trays at the Food Fair. Mom said if I really wanted to win, we should concentrate on doing two or three entries really well rather than making a whole bunch of entries. I did that and guess what? I didn't win grand champion, but I got reserve grand champion! I did a demonstration on making cookies.

By my third year in 4-H, mom said I was old enough to help put up vegetables and fruits from the garden. I learned that cutting corn off the cob is hard work and okra is really slimy when you blanch it. She also said I was old enough to start cooking some on my own, so I did and I haven't burned the house down yet! That year I made biscuits for the fair and won 1st place at the County Fair and 1st place at the State Fair. I also had lots of entries in the Food Fair and finally won Grand Champion for my age group. I wanted to win the Shawnee Milling Breads award, so I did a demonstration on making my famous biscuits.

Sheep

My sheep project began with two wethers. Like most kids, I loved to take care of them – they were really more like pets than livestock. One was kind of sickly and I even snuck him in the house a few times when it was really cold. As they grew and were less playful, getting up early to take care of them before school became more of a chore. I really wished my dad would do it for me sometimes, but I knew it was my responsibility. My hard work didn't pay off immediately – my first show season was disappointing, but my dad reminded me of how responsible I had become. I didn't really like getting rid of the lambs at the end of the show season, so the next year we bought two ewes and a wether.

When the ewes were old enough, we had them bred and the two of them had three babies the following spring. I was very sad when one of them died, but I was able to show one of the babies the following year and while Charlie didn't win many ribbons, I was proud to say I had raised him. With help from a couple of local sheep breeders, dad and I bought three more ewes with the goal of raising our own show lambs and increasing the herd size. With five ewes and eventually their babies to take care of, and a growing social and extracurricular school schedule, I had to learn to set priorities and manage my time to get it all done. While there were still mornings that I wish Dad would do chores for me, I understand that the sheep depend on me for everything and that it's my responsibility to take care of them.

Have I raised the Grand Lamb at the County Show? Not yet, but one of the lambs I raised was breed champion last year. My small flock has grown to 20 ewes and their offspring. While they may not produce a grand champion or make me rich, they have put a little money in the bank and the Lifeskills they have taught me are worth more than any ribbon.

Food Science

Food Science is my favorite 4-H project because – you guessed it – I love to cook! The Food Network is a regular on my TV viewing schedule. My favorite cook is Rachel Ray and I love the Iron Chef competition. According to my family, I've always been quite creative in the kitchen. During the pre-cloverbud years, I was known for Cool-Whip sandwiches and Strawberry Hamburgers among other unique creations.

Participating in the Culinary Club has been really fun. I learned so much more than just cooking. We set the table for a variety of different meals; we all did demonstrations and workshops for the group and we tried new recipes each week. We also had homework. One week, we were sent home with a can of biscuits and told to bring back a creation of our own. My Italian Flatbread was such a hit that later in the schedule, I did a workshop for all the club members on how to make it. As a service project, our club prepared a meal and delivered it to the Ronald McDonald House. Our county officer group also served a meal at the Ronald McDonald House and ate with the residents.

Because of my parents' schedules, I am often ready for dinner before they are home (or before mom can get a "real" meal put together.) Most days, I not only prepare a snack for myself and my friends, but I also prepare my dinner. Notice that I said MY dinner. My family still doesn't appreciate my inventive cooking, so I generally have my creations all to myself. I enjoy cooking so much that I asked for a blender for my birthday and I've used my mom's new Kitchenaid mixer more than she has.

Sheep

Who would have ever guessed, back in 1999 that buying two wethers would have made such a difference in my life? Although my first show ring experiences resulted in few ribbons and even less premium money, we made lots of memories. I learned that it's really embarrassing when your lamb chews on the pony tail of the cute girl crouched down next to you. I learned that bringing new life into the world is always exciting and sometimes more than a little challenging. Probably most important, I learned what it's like to have something completely dependent on you for its survival.

Dad bought my first two ewe lambs and helped with feed costs, but several years ago, I got a loan from the bank to buy a small flock of sheep from a neighbor who was scaling down his operation. Now I understand why dad worries so much. I just knew the first time I lost a lamb that I wouldn't be able to pay off the note. Since that time, I've made some money and I've lost some, but I've learned a lot about responsibility and management. I've never won Grand Champion, but I have raised almost every lamb I have shown in the last five years, and I take pride in that. A few of my sheep have been good enough to sell as show lambs and I'm always proud when one of the younger members shows one of my lambs.

I have really enjoyed teaching younger members how to care for their sheep. We have project club meetings twice a month at a different member's house so everyone can see how the lambs are coming along. I learn as much from the kids as I teach them. Since I will be graduating next year, I'm lining up a couple of the older club members to take over when I'm gone, so the work of the club can continue.

Food Science

I've always cooked at home - from the days before I could read and my mom had to read the recipe and color code the measuring cups and spoons with the recipe. After I started reading, I even ordered kid's cookbooks from school book orders. While looking through cookbooks is no longer a recreational activity, I do enjoy experimenting with new recipes. I really like vegetables, which is fortunate since my parents have a fruit and vegetable business along with their regular jobs.

That means that at times, I have a lot of vegetables to experiment with and preserve. The rule is that if the produce isn't marketable, we preserve it for use at home, or turn it into a value-added product like jam or relish. Since we're currently experiencing a zucchini population problem (too many), I have been trying to copy the commercially breaded product and cut down on fat - the last version was quite good - except there was a little too much red pepper. Because I like to experiment with different recipes, entering the Sure Jell contest at the State Fair was a natural for me. The only requirements are that Sure Jell pectin be used in the recipe and the recipe must be an original (not published) recipe.

I also enjoy going to the Pink House Community Action Center. A 4-H member or volunteer presents some type of educational program there every week. I have progressed from handing out papers and washing dishes to presenting part of the program. "Bread in a Bag" is a program I especially enjoy presenting. Kids of all ages love working with bread dough. Last summer, while presenting this program at the Pink House, I discovered that you really do need the more expensive name brand freezer bags. In trying to cut costs, we had purchased a store brand bag, and almost every group punched a hole in the bag while mixing the dough. The bread was still OK, but we had a much bigger mess to clean up at the end.