



Creating Club By-Laws

Why does a 4-H club need by-laws?

By having fair and written rules all members have an understanding of the club structure. The following is a suggested format for 4-H club by-laws. Some sections may be adapted to meet local needs. Include in the by-laws the date it was approved as well as the date it was most recently revised.

The by-laws describe when and where the club meets, what officers the club elects, etc. The 4-H Club By-Laws need to be readily available to every family and easy to find. The 4-H Club By-Laws should be kept current; reviewing them annually by the 4-H Club membership.

What Are the Benefits of the Members and Leaders creating and reviewing their By-Laws?

Everyone in the club should get the opportunity to participate in the creation of these documents. Member involvement in creating these documents is an excellent way to develop interest, leadership, writing skills, and decision-making skills.

The entire 4-H club is responsible for writing and approving the bylaws. It is important that members, parents and volunteer leaders have input in how the club operates. Adults should only serve as advisors to the team of youth who create and revise the document.

Tips for the By-Law Process

The mention of creating or updating the club's by-laws is not that exciting, therefore the process must be hands on, fun, and exciting. The educational component will come naturally as the process unfolds. One of the first things a club may want to do is establish a committee to design and create a draft for the club to review. This does not all have to be done in the same night, give yourself and the team some time to process their thoughts and add to valuable discussion.

Process ideas:

Below are a few ideas that may be helpful in providing ownership to the process.

- Post flip chart paper up around the room, each paper having a separate article on the top of the page.
 - Have members of the team walk around the room and write up what they think belongs under each heading.
 - Have members write information and ideas on a note card and then post the note card under the appropriate heading.
- Divide the team into smaller groups giving each group a listing of sections. Allow the groups to brainstorm information that should be included under each article.

Whatever method your team chooses to use, the processing of ideas is vital for team success. Once ideas are gathered and presented, discussion must take place. The group can move the ideas around and create a logical flow for their club. Again, this is a process over time, it is not designed to all happen in one meeting.

What to do once your by-laws have been created:

After the document is put together in draft form, it must be presented to the club for adoption or ratification. The first step in this process is to read aloud and discuss each article individually. Final ratification or adoption will not occur until the next meeting. This allows members time to think about the material and suggest any changes before voting. The final step to this process is to read the document in its entirety at the next meeting and to take a final vote of the 4-H Club membership on rather to except the document as read.

For more information on club y-laws refer to *A Guide to Writing Club Bylaws* and *Example Club Bylaws*.