MAKE UP YOUR OWN MIND

SELF-DETERMINED PROJECTS
A self-determined project allows you to plan to do what you want to do and learn in 4-H. The real meaning of "self-determined" is that each 4-Her carrying this project can determine what he wants to learn, regardless of the subject.

In many cases, 4-H projects have not or could not cover all interests of today's young people. Therefore, the self-determined project offers an opportunity to branch out into any field of study.

Before starting your self-determined project, read this entire project guide. It will give you a clearer idea of the whole scope of your new venture in 4-H projects. By being familiar with all the necessary steps for successful project planning and development before you start, many wasted efforts and much time may be saved.

It is important to have a plan at the beginning of a self-determined project. It is suggested that you review your plan with an adult and have it approved. In this way, you can obtain suggestions and guidance.

Signed

4-H leader advising on the project

Date begun

You can use this publication as a work book. However, it would probably be more effective and satisfying to develop your own notebook, using this publication as a guide.
SELECTING YOUR PROJECT

It is important to learn how to make decisions. We make them all of our lives. The selection of a worthwhile and interesting project is an important decision you have an opportunity to make.

This decision-making guide was designed to help you select, plan, and evaluate projects of your own choosing.

One way to begin is to make an inventory of your interests, needs, aspirations, and concerns. This inventory is not necessarily related to anything you are now doing or have done—it could include something new that you want to do.

As you work on your inventory, you may want some help and guidance from other people. For example, you could talk with friends, neighbors, parents, leaders, teachers, Extension workers, clergymen, counselors, scientists, artists, craftsmen, business people, farmers, ranchers, homemakers, engineers, mechanics, dietitians, nurses, doctors, dentists, or laborers. You can probably think of other people that can also help you.

Before you make an inventory of your interests, needs, aspirations, and concerns, perhaps it will help you to look at some definitions of terms.

An interest is something which excites your feelings and gains your attention or curiosity. It causes you to say, "I'd like to do that!"

A need is something which you, your family, or your community seem to want, to lack, or to require. You say to yourself, "Yes, I can see that it is necessary to do that."

Your aspirations are strong wishes, something you long for, desire with eagerness, or seek to attain. You find that welling up in you is an ardent desire which causes you to feel, "I really want to try to reach that."

Your concerns are those things which affect the welfare and happiness of yourself, your family, your club, and the community, society, or world in which you live. A concern is of importance to you—you care.
MAKING AN INVENTORY

Think of yourself in relation to others. List five to eight ideas which interest you. List ideas which are related to you and your ever-expanding relationships with other people: You, yourself; you and your home and family; you and your friends; you and others in your community, county, state, nation, and world.

1. __________________________  5. __________________________

2. __________________________  6. __________________________

3. __________________________  7. __________________________

4. __________________________  8. __________________________

Include ideas or problems you'd like to investigate; something which you'd like to be able to do, find out about, or learn; situations about which you feel strongly; things which you think you need to do or wish you could do; ways in which you could be helpful to other people.

One young person advised, "Make sure of reasonable ideas. Some of mine have been completely impossible!"

Other young people point out that a self-determined project can stem from, or be in connection with, a project you are already carrying. This gives you a chance to do some research in the field.

A girl said, "Letting the project open to anything gives a person a chance to broaden his horizon. My self-determined project has led me to a future career."
Sometimes it is difficult to pinpoint your own interests. Other people may help "mirror" your enthusiasms, abilities, potentialities, and difficulties. They can help you see what you want to do or wish you could do now—or possibly five years from now.

Name and describe some of the people you talked with. Tell how they helped you with ideas for your inventory.
MAKING A CHOICE

When you have listed your interests, needs, aspirations, or concerns, you will want to narrow these down to three ideas which you might be able to do something about this coming year.

Consider these things when trying to choose between your ideas.

--What are your personal experiences?

--How and where can you get information?

--How much is it going to cost?

--How worthwhile is the project going to be to you?

--What do you think you might be able to learn from it?

--What other people besides yourself will benefit from it? Should your idea be an individual project or should a group of people work together on it?

--What other things (such as your school activities) will you be doing which may affect: your time, energy, how well you can do the project, cost?

--Do you have someone to go to who is willing to help and who knows something about what you want to learn?

--Would this help you decide your future career?

--Will it fit in with your home and family situation?

A 4-H member pointed out that these criteria are important because they help you decide what is reasonable. After using the above criteria, one girl decided she wouldn't take the project she had listed. This was fine. It's better to be able to make this decision while the project is still in the planning stage than to find out later on that you are not interested or able to take the project.
Using the suggested criteria for making choices, list the three ideas you have chosen from those you listed earlier.

1. ______________________

2. ______________________

3. ______________________

Now, pick one of the three ideas which you (or you together with others) will develop as a project. Circle it above. Tell why you chose this project and what things you considered when making the selection.
PLANNING YOUR PROJECT

We all plan ahead; we have to. A plan is what we make ahead of time so we can do something we want in the future.

Some plans are just thoughts; other plans are written. It is well to write down a plan when there are many things to consider—for example, facilities, equipment, availability of subject matter material, seasonal planning, and expenditure of time and money.

SETTING UP GOALS

Goals are meaningful if stated in terms of "what I hope to learn." Learning implies change or growth, and takes place in three interrelated areas:

1. Attitudes, feelings, values, beliefs, dedications.
2. Skills, ways of doing things, actions, behavior.
3. Knowledge, facts, information, thinking, understanding.

Note that several different words are listed under each of the three areas to indicate the various meanings involved.

You have chosen a project yourself. Therefore, it is self-determined. You want to have satisfactions in carrying out your project. Therefore, you need to set goals and describe ways you will go about trying to accomplish your goals.

You may want to find out what there is to learn in a project before you can write down some goals. So you might want to visit with some person who can give you some information or ideas on the subject. There are all kinds of possibilities—parents, teachers, neighbors, friends, businessmen, farmers, laborers—all anyone who is interested in the subject or who is doing something related to it.

MAKING YOUR PROJECT PLAN

Consider your goals and the techniques to use to meet them when you develop your project plan.
Goals

What do you need to learn in order to carry out this project?


What skills will you need to develop?


Are any changes in your attitudes involved?


Techniques

What do you need to do?


Where can you get help?


What resources do you need?


What kinds of record keeping will help you?


What learning experiences will help you accomplish your goals?
You may want to write a description or plan of your self-determined project rather than using the form given on the preceding page. Include: how and why you chose the project; your goals; and techniques, procedures, tasks, responsibilities, and learning experiences you plan to use in order to accomplish your goals.
One girl used the following project plan to describe the goals and techniques she used. Read and analyze her plan to help you develop your plan.

**SAMPLE PROJECT PLAN**

"Goals: The Congo is one of the areas in the world that is a trouble area. The problems involved here are deep-seated and complex with very little information known or understood. From this study, I intend to: (1) Get a better understanding of the area, (2) Learn why this land is so important and such a problem, and (3) Study the spread of Communism and U.S. involvement.

"As an American citizen, I feel I should know more about some world problems. My project will be divided up into a study of the country itself, a study of the people, a background of the history up to and through the division, a study of the U. N. Congo charter and two-year term there, a study of the U. S. and Russia as they enter the Congo, a study of the Red Chinese plans for the country, and a complete study of the recent uprising and discussion of the political future of the country.

"I plan to carry this out through the use of a scrapbook and written report covering the above material, maps, and illustrations, and an exhibit at the fair.

"I became interested in a project of this sort from my trip to Washington, D. C. for citizenship. I became very interested in the Congo through my school work at college. I have given several reports on this subject and worked on a panel with this topic.

"In my project, I intend to get both viewpoints on the issue. To gain the one, I plan to interview the two African foreign exchange students at the college."
DEVELOPING YOUR PROJECT

In order to carry out your plans and develop your project, you may want to do some of the following:

--Review your project plans with other young people and with adults.

--Ask people for help—verbally or by letter. Make appointments with people; respect their time and energy.

--Write for literature and materials. Inquire about costs.

--Subscribe to publications which will help.

--Go to libraries. What books, magazines, or publications do they have which give information related to your project?

--Visit persons and places where information can be obtained on your project.

--Clip information from newspapers and magazines.

--Watch for help from radio and TV programs.

--Ask to be included in meetings, tours, events, and activities related to your project.

--Try out, experiment, investigate, do many things which will aid learning.
List some of the ideas you have for developing your project and resource people who can help you. Consider the suggestions on the opposite page.
EVALUATING YOUR PROJECT

Satisfactions come when you can see your progress or improvement. Evaluate your progress throughout your project.

Progress is measured in terms of the goals you set at the beginning of your self-determined project. You need to ask yourself and ask others:

--What am I learning?
--What am I accomplishing?
--How well am I doing?
--How do I feel about what I am doing?
--Is this project really helping me to grow?
--Am I meeting the goals that I set for myself?
--Do I need to keep track of money spent and received?
--How can I share with other people what I have learned?
--Do I need to keep a written record to show how I am progressing?

REPORTING PROGRESS

In order to evaluate your own growth in relation to your self-determined project, you will want to learn how to collect evidence of progress towards the goals which you listed.

Here are some ways to record progress towards your goals.

1. Take pictures. Photographs and colored slides or movies can tell a story. You could take before and after pictures. You could plan a series of pictures to show the steps or different stages in the development of your project.

Through pictures or a slide series you can effectively record experiences, data, or the results of investigations.
2. Keep records. There are many kinds or forms of records such as: diaries, outlines, stories, notebooks, written reports, tables, charts, drawings, and pictures.

You will need to decide what best fits your project. Whatever methods you use to keep records, it might help you to consider these questions:

--How can you show the extent to which you are learning or accomplishing what you set out to do?

--How can you describe or show what you did?

--How can you show the data collected or the results of your investigations or work?

--In what ways is what you have done of benefit to other people?

--Is there any reason to show how you used your time and energy?
Do you need to keep track of the money spent and received?

Turn on your imagination and let your creative potential go to work. Records need not be a boring, meaningless chore. The records you develop can be exciting because you thought them up and they make sense to you, your project, and other people.

3. Have samples, models, or objects. Some projects lend themselves to growing, making, or collecting. These examples of what you have done provide evidences of your growth in knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes.

4. Discuss with people. You can gain insights about your progress by discussing your project with people who have experiences different from yours or in addition to yours.

A girl with a rabbit project was not aware of how much she knew and could do until she was asked to tell Peace Corps trainees about her work during a visit to her home.

You might arrange for visits or interviews in some cases. In other instances, you may want to exchange letters with people interested in you and your projects.

A boy with a ham radio operator project talked each week via short wave with his uncle in Idaho. This helped the boy decide how he was getting along and what he wanted to do next.
**SHARING WHAT YOU LEARN**

Further satisfactions and opportunities for growth come from sharing what you have learned with other people.

Sharing can also help you summarize, analyze, and further assess what you are accomplishing.

These ways of sharing can be considered.

-- Individual help, workshops, programs, meetings, and committees.
-- Exhibits, window displays, bulletin boards, and fair booths.
-- Demonstrations, illustrated talks, dramatic scenes, and TV programs.
-- Talks, interviews, panel discussions, and radio programs.
-- Newspaper articles and features in magazines.
-- A self-determined project open house.

**WORKSHOPS**

Let's say that people in your community or county have asked you to help put on a two-hour workshop. It is to be for young people and adults who are interested in self-determined projects. These questions are designed to help plan such a workshop.

-- How would you get the people acquainted and feeling comfortable?
-- What do you think the people coming to the workshop could learn about self-determined projects?
-- What learning-teaching experiences would you use so that they could learn these things?
-- How would you program the two hours? When would you begin and end? Figure out the approximate time you would devote to each learning activity.
Usually fairs and shows do not lend themselves to adequate sharing, presentation, and evaluation of self-determined project work. You and others in your club and community may want to stage an open house.

**AN OPEN HOUSE**

In a self-determined project open house, each person prepares a display on a table. Then each exhibitor stands or sits by this table in order to answer questions by those who come to see and learn.

For example, a girl prepared a display based on her project, "Japanese Culture". She included a poster with the goals of her project; the complete kimono costume she made and assembled; the wall hanging she painted; the recipes, habachi, chopsticks, bowls, paddles, and tray used in cooking and serving rice and sukiyaki; the books from which she obtained information; and the notebook prepared to summarize her work.

Another girl has been formally interviewed and informally questioned about her project on the "Leaf Cutter Bee". This kind of interviewing and questioning can take place at an open house. She was asked these questions:

---How did you happen to choose this project?
---Did you have help in setting up your goals?
---Did you discuss your plan with anyone after it was written?
---Did you have any resource person to guide you?
---What books or other publications have you read related to your project? What resource people did you contact?
---What people have interviewed you, questioned you, or been interested in your project?
---How have you shared what you learned with other people?
---To what extent have you accomplished goals you set for yourself?
---What have you learned in your project?
---How and when did you decide whether you would do the project for one year or longer?
EXAMPLES OF SELF-DETERMINED PROJECTS

Self-determined projects can take several courses. Here are some examples.

You can take a different direction on a single phase of an already existing project, or set up your own plan to continue or expand on an already existing project.

--Designing and Making Jewelry from Semiprecious Stones
--Leaf Cutter Bee
--Clothing, Foods, and Nutrition Related to Japanese Culture
--Comparison of Methods of Making Hay
--History of the Appaloosa Horse
--Peck Order in Dairy Cattle

You can develop a plan for a project not currently listed by the Cooperative Extension Service.

--Greece
--Art
--Poetry
--Music
--Study of the Black-Billed Magpie
--Learning About the Stars
--Learning to Play a Guitar
--Customs of Other Countries
--A Study of the Family
--Medical Technology Research
--Science of Foods and Cooking
--Worldwide Problems
--Home Hair Styling
--Restoring Old Cars
--Antiques
--Indian Culture
--Travel
--Learning to Fly
--Becoming a Herdsman
--Boat Building

Many of these topics are very general, some are very specific; some would take a long time to accomplish. This points up how important it is to write down specific goals for each topic and to decide what can reasonably be done in a year's time. Such a written plan makes it possible to check back on goals; see what progress has been made; and develop plans for the next year.
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