

4-H Communication Fact Sheet 4.0

4-H Illustrated Talks

Kansas 4-H members have been learning to speak skillfully before an audience for more than 100 years. It is often one of the things people say they most remember about their 4-H experiences — before participating in 4-H, they could not speak comfortably in front of an audience. Thousands of youth have learned, through 4-H, the skills necessary to clearly organize and present ideas and instructions through project talks, demonstrations, illustrated talks and public speaking. This fact sheet focuses on the 4-H illustrated talk.

What is an illustrated talk?

Have you ever told someone how to overhaul an engine, can peach preserves, or harvest or process a market animal? If so, you've given the talking part of an illustrated talk.

The demonstration and illustrated talk are both effective teaching methods. However, you need to understand the difference between the two to best present your idea. One type of talk is of no greater value than the other.

Decide which method will be the most effective for teaching what you want to teach. Members occasionally confuse an illustrated talk with a demonstration. An illustrated talk **tells** how, but a demonstration **shows** how. At the end of an illustrated talk there will not be a finished product that was made during the presentation. You will likely show listeners a product you made earlier.

If the topic you're thinking about doesn't lend itself to showing (demonstration), perhaps you could tell how (illustrated talk). The following summary may be used in aiding members to understand illustrated talks.

Illustrated talks:

- tell how,
- have a purpose to teach,
- are for any age 4-H member.

Illustrated talks may be 10 minutes for 7- to 13-year-olds and 15 minutes for 14- to 18-year-olds.

Illustrated talks at a glance

- Tell (not show) how.
- Are for any 4-H member.
- Tell about doing something, with no end product.
- Visuals are encouraged, when they complement.
- Questions are asked of the presenter.
- Are generally from 5 to 15 minutes long.

Team illustrated talks

Illustrated talks may be done individually or in a team, usually with two persons in the same age division.

A team illustrated talk might be desirable when:

- more than two hands are needed to illustrate the idea;
- friends or first-time presenters can work together;
- talking and illustrating are difficult to do at the same time.

Team illustrated talks require teamwork and cooperation. They also require practice to do well. Some topics are a natural for a team illustrated talk, but other topics are difficult for a team to do well. If that's the case, it may be better to present the illustrated talk as an individual.

When giving a team illustrated talk, it's important that both individuals talk frequently in a balanced approach. One person should not talk and illustrate for long periods while the other person stands and listens. There should be a smooth ebb and flow of talking and illustrating between team members. The presentation should seem natural, like a conversation between two friends. If questions are asked at the end, presenters should alternate in answering them. The other presenter may add more information at the conclusion of the answer.

Purpose of an illustrated talk

An effective, successful illustrated talk should:

- present to an audience the importance of a practice or procedure;

- convince an audience of its value or importance;
- create in the audience the desire to put the same practice or procedure to use.

Plan your illustrated talk

The most successful presentations reflect your own ideas and are expressed in your own words. The following items should be considered when planning and presenting an illustrated talk:

1. Select a subject or topic.
2. Gather information.
3. Choose a title.
4. Develop an outline.
5. Choose visuals, if appropriate.
6. Practice delivery.

1. Select a topic

The topic should fit your interest, experience, knowledge and skill. 4-H projects are excellent sources of topics for presentations. You will be most successful if you select a topic from your own project experience. When selecting a topic, ask yourself:

- Is the subject learned as part of my 4-H experiences?
- Is it of interest to others?
- Does it have enough steps to describe?
- Can an audience see it easily?
- Can it be given in the time allowed?
- Is it within my ability (not too simple, but not too difficult)?

If “yes” is the answer to each of these questions, you are ready for the next step.

2. Gather information

Be selective when choosing resources. Make every effort to ensure the information is accurate, up to date and complete. Some sources for information are:

- 4-H project manuals
- K-State Research and Extension publications
- Textbooks
- Web sites and libraries
- Newspapers and magazines
- Local experts in their fields
- Manufacturers

3. Choose a title

Spend time thinking about a title. This is your first opportunity to capture the audience’s attention. Once this is accomplished, you will find public speaking easier. Think of the books you have read or movies you’ve watched because the titles were interesting.

Effective titles are short, descriptive and engaging. A title should suggest the presentation subject without telling the whole story.

4. Develop an outline

After determining the topic, gathering all necessary information and selecting a title, you are ready to put it down in writing — in outline form.

Organization is essential for developing a good presentation with a clear, concise message. The outline serves as a guide to:

- present material in a logical sequence;
- determine the balance between talking and doing;
- relate the visuals, equipment and supplies with the information given;
- emphasize the essential; delete the unimportant.

One simple method for writing an outline is shown in the *4-H Demonstration and Illustrated Talk Outline Planning Form* (4H981). This form helps you outline each step in the process or procedure. There are many other types of outlines. The important thing is to find an outline form that has meaning to you and you will use. The outline method of planning illustrated talks teaches organization.

Parts of an illustrated talk

All talks have three parts: an opening or introduction, the body that presents the information, and a summary or conclusion that highlights the main points of the illustrated talk.

1. The **introduction** to an illustrated talk is your second opportunity (after the title) to capture the audience’s attention. A good introduction is relatively short and has ingenuity and variety. To get attention, do one of the following:

- Ask a question.
- State a problem.
- Show a unique object or picture.
- Tell a startling fact or statistic.
- Make a challenging statement.

- Show a finished product.
- Use a quote or headline.
- Tell a short story.

2. The **body** is the main part of the illustrated talk and should be about 80 percent of your talk. First, tell what it is you will be presenting. Perhaps it's telling how to build a birdhouse or make three kinds of salsa. Then, following your outline, describe the process.

3. The **summary** or conclusion is concise and pertinent. A summary should not restate each step, but should highlight a few important ideas for the audience to remember. You can do this by motivation — appealing to the values and interest of the audience. The motivation may include such things as saving money, time or energy.

Prepare for questions

Allow time for questions after an illustrated talk. Think about questions you could be asked, and prepare answers ahead of time. Avoid overusing the phrase “The question has been asked....” (However, you may need to restate a question if some audience members are unable to hear it.) Questions are asked for two reasons:

- to clarify some point or points that were not covered or judges failed to hear.
- to check your knowledge.

When answering questions:

- Give only correct answers.
- Don't bluff. If you don't know the answer, admit it.
- If you are unable to answer a question, refer the questioner to a possible source.
- Use variety in replying to questions.

Other resources to help you

4-H Communication Fact Sheets:

4H975 *Kansas 4-H Project Talk Scoresheet*

4H976 *Kansas 4-H Demonstration and Illustrated Talk Scoresheet*

4H977 *Kansas 4-H Public Speaking Scoresheet*

4H978 *Kansas 4-H Presentation Overview*

4H979 *4-H Project Talks*

4H980 *4-H Demonstrations*

4H981 *4-H Demonstration or Illustrated Talk Outline Form*

4H983 *4-H Public Speaking*

4H984 *Effective Presentation Tips*

4H985 *Preparing and Using Visual Aids*

4H986 *Presentation Brainstorming Activity*

5. Choose visuals

Visual aids — either a poster and electronic medium — can help the audience better understand and remember what you are telling them. Visuals should be used only if they make the presentation more effective and should not distract from it. They can also help you remember what to do and say next and are preferred to note cards.

6. Practice delivery

Practice is important if you want to become a skilled presenter. Only through practice can improvement be made and presentations polished. Try videotaping your presentation. It will help you see ways to improve your posture, eye contact, delivery speed, voice, enunciation, mannerisms and gestures, general appearance, demeanor (smile and other facial expressions) and organization.

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