

State 4-H Ambassador Manual



Congratulations, State Ambassador. You earned your membership through your successful 4-H career and your desire to serve.

These guidelines will help you as a State 4-H Ambassador in the Mississippi State University Extension 4-H Program.

PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The MSU Extension 4-H Ambassadors Program enhances the leadership, citizenship, and communication skills in teen leaders. You will have opportunities to assist with programs in the state. You will serve as a role model and conduct training that will strengthen life skills and promote individual growth. State 4-H Ambassadors will serve at statewide 4-H events. These 4-H events include, but are not limited to, Mississippi State Fair, State 4-H Congress, Legislative Day, Co-op Leadership Conference, regional Project Achievement Days, and regional horse shows. Ambassadors may also contact donors and legislators about 4-H-related matters, make county visits, and represent 4-H at other organizational meetings.

OBJECTIVES

- Make 4-H more visible in the county and across the state of Mississippi.
- Maintain and build relationships with 4-H alumni and supporters.
- Increase membership in the statewide 4-H program.
- Promote individual growth within members.

AMBASSADOR CALENDAR

May/June

State 4-H Congress, election of new council officers, Ambassador and national conference delegate selection. Ambassador assists at regional Project Achievement Day contests.

July

Senior record books.

August

Ambassador training.

October

Ambassadors spend a day at the Mississippi State Fair.

November/December

County visits as requested.

January/February

Ambassador applications due. Legislative Day activities.

March/April

National 4-H Conference for delegates. Ambassador interviews.

AGE AND TIME REQUIREMENTS

Serving as a State 4-H Ambassador requires a time commitment. An Ambassador can expect to devote from 20 to 30 days a year to his or her role. State 4-H Ambassadors must be 15 years old by January 1 of the current year but not yet 19 years old.

QUALITIES & SKILLS ESSENTIAL TO STATE 4-H AMBASSADORS

- A genuine enthusiasm for 4-H.
- Ability to meet people easily, even strangers.
- Positive behavior and good communication skills.
- Active participation in 4-H.
- Public speaking skills, both planned and extemporaneous.
- A genuine commitment to 4-H as shown by a willingness to put a high priority on the responsibilities of serving as a State 4-H Ambassador. While State 4-H Ambassadors can be active in other organizations, they are expected to place 4-H at the top of the list during their year of service.
- Ability to be a team player at all times.
- Academic skills that will permit being absent from school without seriously jeopardizing grades.
- Parents who are committed to 4-H and are willing to support their teen in carrying out their responsibilities.
- Being well groomed and willing to wear the official Ambassador attire.

ADVISERS

State 4-H staff and agents will be the primary advisers to the State 4-H Ambassadors. Each 4-H member's agent has a responsibility to support and encourage his or her 4-H'ers. If any conflict arises, the 4-H'er should contact the state 4-H staff adviser and solve the problem directly, rather than asking his or her agent to become involved. The 4-H'er's agent will get a copy of all communications.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Strong parental support and encouragement are indispensable. Your parents were aware of the time and financial requirements before you decided to become an Ambassador. You have an

obligation to keep your parents informed and to do everything you can to keep up your part at home. Never take parents for granted. They are closest to you during good times as well as discouraging times. Show your appreciation with an occasional "thank you" and some big hugs.

If your parents have a concern about your role and responsibilities, suggest they call your staff adviser.

SCHOOL

You are committed to doing a good job as a State 4-H Ambassador, but keep school work in perspective. Manage your time carefully to maintain good grades. Occasional school absences are necessary to serve in your new job. Be sure to work out absences in advance with school officials. Balance school and leadership activities, and you will be a productive team member.

Some Ambassador functions are more important than others. By the end of your first training meeting, you will know these priorities. There will be times when you may need to postpone or decline some lower priority invitations to keep school, family, 4-H, and other activities in focus. Parents and school officials recognize the extraordinary learning experience you will have as a State 4-H Ambassador.

CONDUCT

You won't go wrong by being conservative in dress, actions, and language. Don't be a snob; be a friendly, outgoing person. Avoid vulgar jokes and language, smoking, drinking alcoholic beverages, boisterous activities, and disrespectful behavior. A friendly smile, combined with a desire to be your best and to do your best, will help you through the year.

Use of alcohol or drugs during the year is just cause for your immediate removal as an Ambassador.

TEAMWORK

You are part of a team. Each of you has a specific and unique job, but you will succeed only as a team. You will not always agree with each other. When you disagree, do so privately within your group, not in public or at a function. Some personalities will be more compatible than others, but you are expected to respect each other and

accept one another's strengths and weaknesses. Remember the rule "praise in public; criticize in private." Once a majority decision is made, the entire team is expected to support the decision.

APPEARANCE

Ambassadors must be neatly groomed and dressed for all official occasions.

You should

- be showered,
- have teeth brushed,
- have hair combed neatly,
- have shoes shined,
- be shaved,
- have clothes clean and pressed,
- be dressed appropriately, and
- be wearing jacket or blazer as prescribed.

Many people may never get to talk to you as a State 4-H Ambassador, but they will see you. It would be a discredit to you and 4-H to give them an unfavorable impression on looks alone.

Here is suggested dress for boys:

- khaki slacks
- black socks
- white shirt
- yellow tie
- official 4-H jacket or blazer or official 4-H polo shirt when appropriate

Here is suggested dress for girls:

- khaki skirt or slacks
- white shirt
- 4-H jacket
- a yellow or green scarf or tie
- official 4-H polo shirt when appropriate

Each group may select a specific uniform with green and white as the main colors.

ATTENDING A FUNCTION

When attending a function as a representative of the State 4-H Program, you will probably be asked to participate. This is an ideal opportunity to inspire 4-H members. It is not, however, the only way.

To do this, arrive early and use the time to meet and talk to as many 4-H members, leaders,

parents, and guests as you can. It is your responsibility to make people feel at ease. Try to learn as much about them as possible. In this time you can make some good friends for yourself and 4-H. Remember: as a State 4-H Ambassador, you have the job of meeting every member, leader, and parent, not vice versa.

To prepare for your contribution to the program, learn as much as you can about the function you are attending. Talking to people before the program begins helps, but a personal check-sheet prepared well in advance is a useful technique. Keep the county agent informed of your arrival time, and let the state adviser know you will be participating in the program.

Know the basic rules of good table manners—which fork to use or which salad is yours. It is hard to smile through your fourth banquet where the menu is repeated, but you can do it. Use your manners, but don't be so concerned about making a mistake that you become self-conscious. Be confident and enjoy the meal.

After you are finished eating, pay careful attention to what others on the program are saying. Remember "do unto the speakers as you would have the audience do unto you."

Smile. Be at ease, self-confident, and composed. People remember much more than what you say. They are also influenced by how you act.

STARTING A CONVERSATION

When you are with another 4-H member, discuss or ask questions about his or her family, project interests, and such. You want people to talk about themselves. An effective Ambassador can get points about 4-H across in the conversation at appropriate times.

Other topics of conversation might be 4-H events, awards he or she has won, activities other than 4-H that he or she has participated in, and future plans.

With older 4-H members, talk about 4-H, school or college, summer work, vacation time, plans for the future, favorite hobbies, sports, food, entertainment, songs, family, favorite places, and outstanding achievements.

With adults, discuss or ask about the following:

- who the person is and where he or she lives
- his or her family

CHECKSHEET



Time, date, and location of function

Name of contact person (4-H leader or county Extension agent)

Phone number of county office and contact

Number of people attending function

Equipment needed for presentation and/or workshop

Schedule interactive video conference

Type of presentation and/or workshop

Comments and additional information

- his or her occupation, and how he or she got started in it
- travel experiences, hobbies, music tastes, favorite sports, and 4-H interests

Always take the initiative to introduce yourself. This is a good way of breaking the ice. A good start might be:

“Hello. I don’t believe we’ve met this evening. I’m _____, and I’m representing the State 4-H Program tonight. What is your name?”

“I’m Mr. _____.”

After the introduction, try to open a conversation.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Mr. _____. You know, I noticed that pin on your lapel. Are you a member of the Lion’s Club?”

A person tends to feel self-conscious if he or she is standing alone in a corner. If you can ease the feeling of self-consciousness and make a person feel comfortable, you have done more than 10 motivational speakers.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

As a representative of the State 4-H Program, you often find yourself participating in a program. Whether presenting an award, introducing a speaker, bringing greetings from the State 4-H Program, or giving the keynote address, you should follow some basic rules of public speaking.

Notes. It is difficult to memorize every presentation, but don’t let notes detract from your presentation.

Microphone. Test your voice on the microphone before the banquet or meeting. Make sure you know how to adjust the height and volume.

Cell phone. Put your cell phone on silent.

Jewelry. Make sure your jewelry is not distracting.

Smile. Show the audience you enjoy being there.

Eye contact. Maintain eye contact with your audience. The ability to read an audience will develop with time. Make sure you put your thoughts in an interesting order, and don’t talk past your time limit.

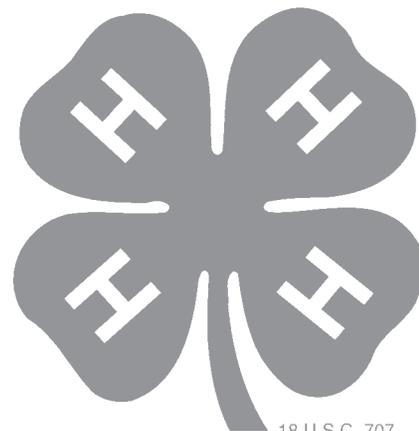
Hands. Control your hands. Don’t jingle coins or keys in your pockets, or wave pens, pencils, or glasses at your audience. Gesture to make a point, as long as the gesture is natural. When not gesturing, keep your hands at your sides or behind the podium.

Posture. Stand up straight. Rocking back and forth on your feet is distracting. Leaning on the podium makes an audience believe you are not interested in your presentation.

Introducing a speaker. Introducing a speaker does two things. It breaks the ice between the speaker and the audience, and it helps make the speaker feel at ease. Know the person you are introducing. Make your introduction short, complimentary, and informative. A good introduction should include the following:

- Where the speaker is from.
- Key positions in which the speaker has served.
- Current position.
- Facts about honors and awards the speaker has received.
- Why the speaker is qualified to talk on the subject.
- Title of the speech.
- Name—always say the speaker’s name *last*.

Stay at the podium until the speaker comes forward. Lead the applause.



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Presenting an award.

- Explain briefly why the award is being made.
- Explain how much the award is deserved.
- Congratulate the recipient and convey everyone's good wishes.
- When presenting the award, extend your hand to the recipient, smile, and try to get a smile in return. This is a perfect moment to take pictures.
- Don't be afraid to start the applause.

Welcome.

- Bring a prepared welcome statement from the State 4-H Program.
- Express your appreciation for being invited.
- Let the audience know you are familiar with their purposes and goals. Emphasize your desire to meet as many of the members and parents as possible.
- Smile and be friendly, enthusiastic, confident, and poised.
- Limit your remarks to 3 to 5 minutes.

Giving a keynote address.

- The three keys to successful presentations are practice, preparation, and perseverance.
- Many nationally known speakers started their careers in front of a mirror or seated behind a tape recorder.
- Know your subject.
- Know your audience; for example, size, interests, values, and knowledge of subject.

Other keys to successful public speaking.

- Have your talk well prepared.
- Recognize the important contributions of the parents and 4-H leaders.
- Recognize and congratulate award winners.
- Express appreciation to the agents, volunteers, donors, and parents for their support toward building a strong 4-H program.

MOTIVATING 4-H'ERS

As an Ambassador, challenge other 4-H members to take advantage of the opportunities offered in the 4-H program to develop their leadership skills. Use 4-H success stories for inspiration. You are the best example. Be yourself—confident and enthusiastic.

REMEMBERING NAMES

As an Ambassador, you will meet many people. Remembering a person's name is an important skill. Here are some ways to remember people's names.

- Hear the name clearly.
- Get a clear impression of the person.
- Repeat the name immediately. Say, "How do you do, Mr. _____?"
- Repeat the name silently to yourself.
- If introduced to a group of people, concentrate intently on each name as you hear it.
- Associate the name with something you can easily remember, such as
 - the person's business
 - a rhyme
 - the person's appearance
 - the meaning of the person's name
 - a mind picture
 - a similar name



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